

THE COLLIER CONTROVERSY: A CRITICAL
BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING DRAMA
OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

by

JOSEPH JOHN POPSON, III

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Joseph J. Popson, III

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Chairman: Aubrey Williams
Major Department: English

In response to Jeremy Collier's attacks on the Restoration stage came a number of excellent defenses which provide a critical basis for understanding the drama of the Restoration period. The defenders, including such playwrights and critics as John Dryden, William Congreve, Sir John Vanbrugh, Thomas D'Urfey, John Dennis, Elkanah Settle, James Drake, John Oldmixon, and Edward Filmer, have given us a very complete source of critical information about Restoration drama. Faced with Collier's essentially Platonic view of the stage, these writers recognized that there were abuses of the drama, but they also saw therein a moral value which they maintained was a necessary part of its artistic value. Unlike many modern critics who have rejected Collier, and with him any consideration of morality in their views of the plays, these defenders answered Collier on grounds that were at once moral and artistic. Historically, then, they were asserting their beliefs that the drama should (and that the best of it still did) instruct and delight the audience. In explaining how the stage functioned, they felt that the representation of "evil" on stage (in the actions and speeches of characters) was not only proper but necessary if the audience was to know and value "good." Rather than seeing the dangers of imitation

as Collier did in his Platonic reaction to evil, they felt the plays offered just choices for all whose understanding and judgment were not depraved.

To counter Collier's apparent influence upon those who did not understand the plays or even attend the theatre, these critics questioned his authority as a judge of the morality in the plays. While consistently maintaining the moral value of most of those plays he attacked, they exposed his gross errors in reading and argument. Among the faults they noted were: inaccurate and misleading quotations of evidence, logical fallacies in his reasoning, an improper tone for a clergyman ostensibly interested in improving plays and playwrights, and a basic misunderstanding of the effects of drama on a Christian audience which was aware of English dramatic tradition. The success of Collier's works (and of others which attacked the stage during the controversy) was not due to poor responses by stage defenders or to the strength of Collier's moral position, as many critics have stated. Rather it was due to the changing taste of the theatre audience and the concurrent activities of the societies for the reformation of manners, which threatened any citizen whose actions or occupations did not exemplify the kind of righteous living they deemed proper.

In their objections to Collier's view of the stage, the critics and playwrights argued from important critical tenets. Enough evidence is obvious in their responses to show that they were very conscious of the roots of English drama and thus saw the Restoration stage as a "little world" upon which the dramas of man were represented to entertain and instruct. For them, the features of variety, pageantry, and Providential testing and justice, so important in Elizabethan drama, were still recognized as parts of those moral designs which Collier could see only as patterns for vice.

INTRODUCTION

On January 4, 1698 the Palace of Whitehall burned. One week later Peter the Great of Russia arrived in England to study shipbuilding and navigation for several months. As the year progressed, a New East India Company was chartered, the London Stock Exchange was formed, Captain Thomas Savery invented a "heat-engine," the first treaty partitioning Spain was signed, the Tories won a bitter political struggle for control of Parliament, William Warburton was born, Daniel Defoe's The Poor Man's Plea was published, Ned Ward started a periodical called The London Spy; the Vanities and Vices of the Town Exposed to View, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was formed, and King William delivered A Proclamation for Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Prophaneness. With the spring, and in the midst of all this activity, Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage hit the presses. Though Collier's book was in one sense a result and a reflection of the reformation temper which existed at the end of the century, it also marked the beginning of a critical controversy about the drama which raged, with all the fury of the fire at Whitehall, well into the eighteenth century. There were three editions of A Short View before the year ended (five editions, in all, were published, plus two reissues by 1740), and one recent scholar estimates conservatively that "by his death, in 1726, somewhere between 75 and 100 books, pamphlets, and articles resulted directly from the influence of the Short View."¹

To find out what beliefs led Collier to this attack on the stage, and how those beliefs conflicted with those of his opponents, a brief look at what is known of this divine's life and writings is in order. It was probably determined from his birth on September 23, 1650 at Stow Qui in Cambridgeshire that Jeremy would follow his grandfather and father as a member of the clergy.² He was first educated by his father, who besides being a divine and a linguist, was master of a free school at Ipswich. Collier went on to receive his B.A. and M.A. from Cambridge and was ordained a deacon in 1676 and a priest in the following year. After officiating for a short time at the Countess Dowager of Dorset's, he moved on to a small rectory at Ampton in 1679, where he stayed for six years. His experience there may not have been too happy, for in his later moral essay "Upon the Office of a Chaplain" (1697) he points out how the curates and chaplains have suffered from lack of respect and material benefits. As Kathleen Ressler notes, in this essay he "advocates higher salaries to improve the learning and status of the profession, for poverty exposes them to contempt and 'scurvy temptation.'"³ It also seems logical that Collier's experience at Ampton may have led to his comments in support of status and material wealth for the clergy in his anti-stage writings.⁴ In any case, the year 1685 found him in London, where he was made a lecturer at Gray's Inn.

With the change in monarchs in 1688, Collier began his career as a devoted and outspoken non-juror. His "Desertion Discuss'd" (1688) caused such irritation in the government that he was imprisoned at Newgate for several months, though never brought to trial. The stay in prison only hardened his opposition to William III, and he continued to

write political pamphlets until his next arrest in 1692, when he and another non-juring clergyman were accused of trying to communicate with the exiled James II. Though he could have gone free on bail, he refused to accept it because that would have meant a recognition of William's jurisdiction. Thus, until released upon the appeal of his friends, he spent about a week in jail penning still another bitter attack on the government entitled "Remarks on the London Gazette."⁵ Nothing is known of Collier again until 1696 when he and two other non-juring clergymen (Cook and Snatt) granted absolution to Sir John Friend and Sir William Perkins at Tyburn. Public and governmental outrage at this was almost universal, for not only had Friend and Perkins been convicted of plotting the assassination of William, they had made no public confession. The feeling was that Collier and the other priests, therefore, did not consider the plotting sinful. While Cook and Snatt were arrested and eventually convicted and released, Collier went into hiding and was outlawed. (He legally remained outlawed for the rest of his life.) His concealment did not stop him from publishing "A Defence of the Absolution" only six days after the execution. When, on the day following the execution "the two archbishops and twelve bishops who were then in London put forth a 'Declaration' condemning the action of the three clergymen as 'an open affront to the laws both of church and state,' and 'as insolent and unprecedented in the manner and altogether irregular in the thing,'"⁶ Collier needed only two weeks to provide yet a further reply in his own defense. Quite clearly he had already developed that quality of self-assured insistence of his views which caused Samuel Johnson to say admiringly that "he was formed for a controvertist."⁷

That Collier felt the need to have his ideas and talents constantly before the public is also indicated by the more than fifty works--ranging from sermons, translations of Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, and An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain to political pamphlets, stage criticism, and The Great Historical, Geographical, Genealogical, and Poetical Dictionary--which were published through the year of his death (1726). From the number and variety of his works, it seems that he must have been supremely confident in his abilities. But even more important in understanding his criticism of the stage is his unbending attitude in controversy. His stubborn persistence in having the last word in his arguments with the Restoration dramatists causes his later admirers to see him as a heroic figure. Thomas Babington Macaulay, for example, says that "we believe him to be as honest and courageous a man as ever lived" and that "the spirit of" A Short View "is truly heroic."⁸ Johnson, too, sees him as a warrior who "walked out to battle, and assailed at once most of the living writers, from Dryden to Duffey," and was victorious because of his "unconquerable pertinacity."⁹ Though his stature as a warrior may be questioned, he certainly seemed to relish the pamphlet wars he fought, and there is no indication that he ever conceded any point for which he was arguing.

A key to his vision of himself as a steadfast moral crusader comes in his Moral Essays where he says that "Fortitude is the Guard of moral Advantage, and the Being of Truth and Justice subsists upon it. . . 'Tis not possible for a Coward to be a good man."¹⁰ But apart from his self-righteous confidence (dangerously close to arrogant pride), a general view of man emerges from Collier's theological writings which carries over to his criticism of the stage. But before citing his

comments on the nature of man, I must say that I feel he exemplifies that group of later seventeenth-century divines whom C. F. Allison calls the "'holy living' school." In his study of the changes in English Christianity during the seventeenth century, Professor Allison concludes that "the view of the Gospel held in the first half of the century," which "manifested a blend of doctrine and ethics, Christian dogma and morals, justification and sanctification, and produced a devotional literature that was profoundly and functionally pastoral," had undergone a significant change. Thus, he sees a new view of the Gospel held by some influential divines in the second half of the century:

The later view rent the fabric of soteriology and split the elements of religion so radically that doctrine became almost irrelevant and ethics became so harsh as to be cruel. There was an ineluctable movement away from the Christian faith of the earlier divines towards a moralism masquerading as faith.

The divines who introduced this trend towards moralism postulated a freedom of will in sinners that was of Pelagian proportions. Their remedy for sin consisted largely of exhortations to lead a holy life.¹¹

This emphasis on the freedom of the human will was also coupled with a Pelagian deemphasis of original sin as a condition of man. Among the "holy living" divines, then, sin came to be treated almost exclusively "as an action rather than as a condition," which, since it was willful, could be controlled by man.¹² Obviously, what this could lead to--and did lead to in Collier, I think--was a glorification of man's nature and his potential for moral living if he willfully avoided sources of vice and sinful action. Man was not corrupt but corruptible.

Professor Ressler, in her study of Collier's Moral Essays, finds that "it is Collier's intense interest in the moral life of man that partially leads him to assert roundly the doctrine of Free Will."¹³

Citing two of Collier's Sermons (VI, II) she goes on to explain his belief that "Will, which is stronger than reason, is impelled to direct motion; plus understanding, it intensifies the power of the soul which is determined towards good [Thus,] when both will and reason combine to embrace God, man approaches nearest earthly happiness."¹⁴ Collier says in his essay, "Of Religious Temper," that "the Essense of future Happiness will consist in the Knowledge and Love of God. The Powers of the Soul may be all reduced to the Understanding, and the Will: When these two Faculties, are fix'd upon the noblest Object, and exercis'd in the most perfect manner, then the Mind is compleatly Happy."¹⁵ And, while he recognizes the necessity for divine grace, he diminishes the importance of it:

Now as far as we can guess at the Operations of Humane Nature, 'tis more entertaining to mount by our own Motion, than to be altogether passive in our Rise: And for this reason, 'tis probable, God has allow'd us the Honour of Cooperating with his Assistances, and having some little share in making our selves happy.¹⁶

The freedom of the will gives man the opportunity to live a happy life here on earth--"Station and Happiness lies in every ones power: The Management of the Will determines Precedency"¹⁷--and to earn his way to heaven: "For tho' a Man is born into this World with his Mother's Labour, yet 'tis his own that must carry him to the other."¹⁸ Ressler also points out "Collier's tendency towards a less literal and more modern [Pelagian?] attitude . . . in his treatment of the Fall and the Devil." She cites a statement in his essay "Of Goodness" which diminishes the effects of original sin:

"[Adam] was not thrown into a Dungeon, condemn'd to Darkness, and exposed to Starving and Stench. 'Tis granted, He was sadly reduced; the Communication with Heaven was cut off; He lost the honour of conversing

with his Maker; He was not supply'd as formerly without Trouble; He was under a necessity of Labour; He was obnoxious to Pain, brought under the Force of Time, and Death and Diseases were let loose upon Him. But after all, this was rather an Abatement of Happiness, than a State of Misery."¹⁹

This essay concentrates on Adam's prelapsarian perfection, not the Fall, in discussing man as a "Divine Image" which, if kept pure, will "naturally" draw "God's Favour."²⁰

This combination of Pelagian tendencies (emphasis on man's free will and a deemphasis of original sin) leads Collier to view man as capable of living a righteous life, and even of coming close to perfection. He says, for example, that "there is a Greatness in Human Nature not to be over-awed by Death. The way to be Possessed of this Quality to purpose, is to live well. There is no such Bravery as that of a good Christian."²¹ If people would "live well" and follow the "Golden Rule," he imagines perfection could be achieved:

Things would look as if the Millennium was commenc'd, or the Gates of Paradise set open. What inviolable Friendship might we then expect, what Exactness in Commerce, what Easiness in Conversation? Want would be in a great Measure remov'd, and Envy thrown out of Society: The Poor would not steal from the Rich, nor the Rich starve the Poor. There would be no such Thing as Fraud and Oppression; No Sallies of Ambition, no grasping at forbidden Greatness, to disturb the World. What Largeness of Mind, what Harmony of Humours, what Peace in Families and Kingdoms Christendom would no longer be the Scene of Confusion, the Field of Blood, and the Sport of Infidels and Devils: There would be no leading into Captivity; no complaining in our Streets. Men might then beat their Swords into Plow-shares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks: Nation would not rise against Nation, neither would they learn War any more. Then Justice would run down like Water, and Righteousness like a mighty Stream: Then People would strive for nothing more than to oblige each other."²²

Certainly no Christian humanist could so mistake the natural depravity

of man (due to the Fall) as even to imagine such paradisiacal conditions for earthly creatures.

With this view of man, it is not surprising when Collier quotes Plato to help him describe a good man: "'A just Person, who keeps close to the Rule of Virtue, acts by the best Precedents, and imitates the Powers above, can't but be lov'd by them: 'Tis impossible for the Gods to overlook a Man so like themselves: To do this, would be in effect to neglect their own Nature, and disregard the happy Qualities they are possess'd of.'" ²³ This Platonic belief about imitating the Gods is very similar to his own view of how man can attain virtue:

Now to resemble God, is the Perfection of Virtue; 'tis doing the wisest, and the Greatest Action in its Kind. To mention but one Advantage, We can't recommend our selves more effectually to God Almighty, than by delighting in the same Actions which he does. Love naturally arises from Likeness of Disposition. Our Imitation of Another, is an unquestioned Proof that we value his Person, and admire his Choice; which lays a kind of an Obligation for a Return By being of the same Temper with God Almighty, we do as it were, engage his Inclinations to make us Happy. While we are thus affected, he can no more be unconcerned about our Welfare, than he can deny himself; or put a neglect upon his own Attributes." ²⁴

This link to Plato is only part of a more complex connection which Professor Ressler points out in her study.²⁵ She sees Plato, through the Cambridge Platonists, as the source for Collier's "'inner certitude,'" his ideas of free will, and his deemphasis of the Fall doctrine with the corollary emphasis on man's divine essence, rather than the Pelagian influences which Allison sees active in the late seventeenth century. Both sources, it seems to me, can be valid when assessing Collier's view of the stage, for the Pelagianists, like Plato in The Republic,

would have been for keeping man out of the way of those sources of evil which could corrupt his basically virtuous nature. Censorship would be necessary if "good living" were to flourish.

To carry Collier's Platonism one step further--that is, to the danger he sees in man's imitation of evil--it is only necessary to turn to A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage.²⁶ He cites Plato early in this work (p. 5) to make the point that men will imitate whatever human behavior they see in a mimetic representation. This belief that man can only benefit from seeing what is good runs counter to some of the strongest sentiments expressed by obvious Christian writers, such as Milton in Areopagitica:

Good and evill we know in the field of this World grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involv'd and interwoven with the knowledge of evill, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discern'd, that those confused seeds which are impos'd on Psyche as an incessant labour to cull out, and sort asunder, were not more intermixt. . . . He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary.²⁷

Milton feels that salvation can only be won through temptation and trial: evil must be confronted, recognized, and resisted; and good must be chosen. This recognition of man's fallen state and his necessity for confronting vice (and therefore, part of his own nature) is certainly in opposition to Plato's view of man in The Republic, but as Milton points out, Plato's laws censoring poets were meant "peculiarly to that

Commonwealth which he had imagin'd," and "he knew this licencing of Poems had reference and dependence to many other proviso's there set down in his fancied republic, which in this world could have no place."²⁸ Collier sees Plato's "fancied republic" as what seventeenth-century England might be, if censorship of the playwrights were effective. He refuses to recognize man's fallen condition and thus feels that some properties of Plato's "imagin'd" world, such as a preservation of man's purity by banning lewd books and entertainment, were possible without the other "proviso's" which Plato called for. He seems to oppose those views of man, expressed by writers like Swift, which emphasize man's post-lapsarian, flawed nature and the necessity of a struggle toward salvation. That Collier can argue that "such Entertainment [plays] . . . does in effect degrade Human Nature, sinks Reason into Appetite, and breaks down the Distinctions between Man and Beast," only emphasizes his impression that man is innocent and virtuous before he encounters representations of vice.²⁹

This Platonic rejection of all that is evil from the stage is repeated throughout A Short View and in his later responses to his critics. In his remarks about D'Urfey's Don Quixote, for example, he suggests that "Beastliness in Behaviour, gives a disparaging Idea of Humane Nature, and almost makes us sorry we are of the same Kind. For these reasons 'tis a Maxime in Good Breeding never to shock the Senses, or Imagination."³⁰ In A Defence of the Short View (1699) he responds to Congreve by stating that "Lussious Descriptions, and Common Places of Lewdness are unpardonable.. They affront the virtuous, and debauch the unwary, and are a scandal to the Country where they are suffer'd. The pretence of Nature, and Imitation, is a lamentable Plea. . . . All

Characters of Immodesty (if there must be any such) should only be hinted in remote Language, and thrown off in Generals."³¹ In his answer to James Drake he cites Plato again concerning the danger of imitating what one sees on stage: "Tis Plato's Opinion then that the Diversions of the Stage are dangerous to Temper and Sobriety; they swell Anger and Desire too much. Tragedy is apt to make Man boisterous, and Comedy Buffoons. Thus those Passions are cherish'd which ought to be check'd, Virtue loses ground, and Reason grows precarious."³² But a basic contradiction in Collier's view of man is seen when he minimizes the danger of confronting evil in his essay, "Of an Apostle":

God has furnish'd every one of us with a share of Judgment and Apprehension: We have a Touchstone against false Coyn, a Test for Right and Wrong, a natural Faculty to take Check at a gross Fallacy, and to encline us to the side of Truth. Suppose I read in a Book in which there are false Notions, and Lectures of Immorality; I may lay it aside at my Pleasure: I am not at all forc'd either to believe the Doctrine, or follow the Advice: No, nor yet to disquiet myself with the Author's Misbehaviour. If I see a Man do an ill Thing, what Necessity is there either for imitation, or disturbing my Head about that which is out of my power? A Man has Light in his Understanding, and Liberty in his Will. He is Master of his Conduct, and by the Grace of God may preserve himself in a tolerable Innocence. By the Privilege of this Liberty, in concurrence with the Assistance of Heaven, we may give Laws to our Passions, and bring them under Management and Discipline. So that to keep our selves harmless and compos'd, there's no need of footing it into the Forest.³³

To this point in the passage Collier is consistent with his other statements about man's potential for leading a righteous life because of his natural attributes of free will and understanding. He also presents a very reasonable position on censorship, which is not at all consistent with his other statements.. To indicate how uncomfortable he probably was with the idea of free choice in reading matter, his next phrase hedges and indicates that the power of good judgment may be reserved

only for great minds like his own. He feels that "this design [virtuous living] will be better pursu'd by staying at Home; by exerting our Native Strength, by informing our Understanding, and by calling in the Aids of Religion." Ultimately, then, (except for himself) it is best to keep out of the way of vice and to know only good if one is to "live well." The contradiction between Collier's belief that virtuous living comes easy (through man's free will and natural goodness) and his desire to keep men from evil (thereby limiting his free will) is never resolved in his arguments. Indeed, the contradiction only lends credence to the view that his conception of man as virtuous was possible only with his concomitant desire for a society like Plato's Republic, where censorship (by those as wise as himself) would protect the people's virtue. But in response to his Platonism, many critics and playwrights were quick to point out the faults in using Plato as an authority. Like Milton, John Dennis emphasizes that "the Commonwealth of Plato is a mere romantick Notion, with which human Nature, and human Life, and, by consequence, Dramatick Poetry, cannot possibly agree."³⁴ Edward Filmer quotes from Sidney's Defence of Poesie, in which Plato's veneration of poetry and poets in his Ion is noted. Sidney feels this attitude reflects Plato's true feelings. But whatever Plato's true thoughts, certainly Filmer's notation at least places Collier's use of this ancient philosopher in proper perspective.

The danger of Collier's Platonism to the drama is suggested by Filmer's observation that Collier would have a character "fix a Paper on his Forehead" as a label to tell what type of person he was.³⁵ Filmer refers of course to Collier's concept of safe dramatic characterization. Dialogue and actions would mean little in a Collier production; statues

with inscribed messages would serve his purpose, for, in Collier's view,

To say a Man has been Prophane in general, and then to punish him is somewhat Intelligible; To make him an Example without Instance, and Particularity, is a safe way of Dramatick Justice: But when he is suffer'd to Act his Distraction, and practice before the Company, the Punishment comes too late. Such Malefactors are infectious, and kill at their very execution. 'Tis much safer to not to hear them talk, than to see them suffer. . . . Some Vices wont bear the naming: They are acted in some measure when they are hearkn'd to.³⁶

This kind of comment leads Drake to state that Collier "is all along a Platonist in his Philosophy" and that "The whole scheme and strain of the Platonick Philosophy, is very romantick and whimsical, and like our Author's works, favours in every particular more strongly of Fancy than Judgment."³⁷

Collier's Platonism manifested itself in expressions of disgust at the evil and corruption he was forced to see and hear on the stage. He was sensitive only to the ability of the wicked and foolish characters to corrupt an audience; therefore, he wished their actions and language merely spoken of--labelled, not seen or heard. His attempt to muffle and finally remove plays as a form of entertainment shows that his understanding of himself and other men presupposed that innocence not only existed but could be preserved if men were cut off enough from the evils of the world. Instead of accepting each man as sinful and capable of redemption, Collier, like Plato, chose to envision a world (city, country) where men could live in purity, protected from those things which had gone farthest "in Debauching the Age": "the Stage Poets, and Play-House."³⁸

With this short view of Collier it may be easier to see how the critics in support of the stage could see the drama as moral, from

a Christian humanistic (and orthodox Anglican) point of view while Collier (and others, like George Ridpath, Arthur Bedford, and William Law)³⁹ demanded censorship on the basis of a moralism that was both Pelagian and Platonic.

NOTES

¹James Thorpe, III, "Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698): A Critical Edition," Diss. Yale, 1969, p. v.

²Most of this biographical information which follows comes from William Hunt's piece on Collier in The Dictionary of National Biography, eds. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee (1921-22; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1937-38), IV, 797-803.

³"Jeremy Collier's Essays," Seventeenth Century Studies, second series, ed. Robert Shafer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1937), p. 257.

⁴See A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (London, 1698), pp. 83-84 & 127-129 and A Defence of the Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage (London, 1699), pp. 70 & 117.

⁵According to the DNB, the subject of this attack was "the loss of English property on the coast of Spain and the defeat of the king at the battle of London" (IV, 798).

⁶DNB, IV, 798.

⁷Lives of the Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (1905; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), II, 220-221.

⁸The Works of Lord Macaulay (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1898), IX, 378.

⁹Lives, II, 221.

¹⁰"Of Fortitude," Essays Upon Several Moral Subjects, part 4, 1st ed. (London, 1709). I have used the 6th edition (1709) of parts 1 & 2 and the 2nd edition (1707) of part 3. Collier says in his essay "Upon Pride" (part 1, 3) that humility should not keep a person from striking out at those who are wrong.

¹¹The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966), p. 192.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 202.

¹³Ressler, p. 185.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁵Moral Essays, part 4, 125.

¹⁶"Of Fortitude," Moral Essays, part 4, 206.

¹⁷"Of Envy," Moral Essays, part 2, 119.

¹⁸"Of the Value of Life," Moral Essays, part 2, 27. Some of the other references in the Moral Essays to the power of the will are: part 1, 19; part 2, 41 & 132-133; part 3, 171-172 & 276.

¹⁹Ressler, pp. 196-197.

²⁰Moral Essays, part 4, 10-11.

²¹Ibid., part 2, 33.

²²Ibid., part 4, 92-93. Elsewhere, Collier speaks of the success of the Apostles: "I confess, their Design was noble and beneficial in the highest Degree: For, what can be greater than to retrieve the Dignity of Human Nature, to bring the World to a Paradisiacal State, and oblige People, in their best capacities of Happiness?" (Moral Essays, part 3, 238-239).

²³Ibid., part 4, 49.

²⁴Ibid., part 1, 175-176. He also states in "Of Fortitude" that "to stand Adversity . . . is to be great above Title and Fortune. This argues the Soul of a Heavenly Extraction, and is worthy of the Offspring of the Deity. Where such a Prize hangs in View, what generous Inclination can neglect it? Who would not be Ambitious of such a Blessing, and endeavour to rise up to so great a Perfection as This?" (part 4, 223).

²⁵pp. 180, 181, 183, 187, 190-193, 195, 197, 222-223, 228, 230-231.

²⁶He makes references to man's tendency to imitate in Moral Essays, part 1, 240-241 and part 2, 16 and to the danger of imitating evil on stage in A Short View, pp. 71 & 204.

²⁷The Works of John Milton, ed. Frank Allen Patterson, et al (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), IV, 310-311.

²⁸Ibid., 316.

²⁹A Short View, p. 6.

³⁰Ibid., p. 205.

³¹p. 10.

³²A Second Defence of the Short View of the Prophaneness and Immorality of the English Stage (London, 1700), p. 17.

³³Moral Essays, part 3, 273-274. Though Collier mentions the need for "the Grace of God" and "the Assistance of Heaven" in this passage, his emphasis, as in the Moral Essays, is upon man's ability, through his own will, to remain innocent.

³⁴The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), 169. James Drake has a similar comment in The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd (London, (London, 1699), pp. 34-35.

³⁵A Defence of Plays (London, 1707), pp. 70-71.

³⁶Defence, p. 16.

³⁷Drake, p. 97.

³⁸A Short View, preface.

³⁹Allison points out that Jeremy Taylor, the leading spokesman for the "'holy living' school," had a tremendous impact on Law (pp. 193-194).

CHAPTER I
THE CRITICAL GROUNDS--NO NEED TO SHIFT THEM

To understand the drama of the Restoration it is necessary to examine carefully the controversy which raged over the morality of the plays and which found its most prolific and vocal spokesman in Jeremy Collier. The controversy would be of little importance if it did not show most convincingly the importance of morality as an element which must be considered in any serious critical examination of that art. There was (and still is) much disagreement about whether the drama, and especially the comedy,¹ is moral or immoral, but many recent critics seem to feel the moral issue is not even important in understanding the plays. Eric Rothstein calls Restoration comedy "one of the most obvious bastions of aristocratic amorality."² John Palmer, in a confusing attempt to divorce art and morality, says that "art is not primarily concerned with morality" and that Congreve "foolishly" argues with Collier on moral grounds.³ Norman Holland redefines morality in his own terms by saying that "if a play is true to its purpose, the pleasure of understanding, then I think it cannot be called immoral."⁴ Thus, he can examine the plays without taking into account the moral attitudes of the contemporary playwrights and critics toward the drama. Rose A. Zimbardo sees the issue of morality in Restoration comedy as "an extra-literary question."⁵ Joseph Wood Krutch claims that in contrast to literary tradition, Restoration "poets were not interested in morality either one way or the other." Though he does not believe, as Collier does, that they are "actively engaged in any systematic attempt to

destroy" morality, "neither were they engaged in any attempt through the employment of satire, or by any other means, to recommend it."⁶

To see the plays basically as amoral, however, is to miss not only what the playwrights felt was the intention of their plays, but that aspect of their vision of the world which helped provide the very structure or pattern of those plays. It is my position that no complete understanding of the plays can be obtained without considering the moral issue at the heart of the Collier controversy, for it reflects the moral concerns of all those interested in the art of writing plays. What many of the modern critics have failed to emphasize (or, perhaps, do not believe) is that late seventeenth-century England was still dominated by a Christian world-view, focused on the workings of Providence and the destiny of human souls. As G. R. Cragg points out in his historical analysis of religious thought during the Restoration period,

The view of the world which had been fashioned in the early centuries of the Christian era and reduced to perfect logical precision by the great schoolmen was still widely current. "This strange medley of fact and fable, of truth and falsehood, of good and evil" represented the world view of the vast majority of the contemporaries of Newton. For many of them Copernicus might never have lived, and even fellows of the Royal Society could retain strange fragments from the older thought.⁷

The ethical perspectives of this world-view have been related to the Augustan humanists by Paul Fussell;⁸ certainly many of these same perspectives also apply to the best post-Restoration writers. Fussell sees the sources of eighteenth-century humanism in the "Christian humanism of the English Renaissance," including Milton and Locke. To see the best writers of the Restoration as humanists--with an "immoderate love of 'humane learning,'" with a belief in the paradoxical and flawed nature

of man, with an assumption "that ethics and expression are closely allied," and with a vision of "man not primarily as a maker or even a knower, but rather as a moral actor"⁹--seems not only reasonable but obvious with a proper understanding of their works. Evidence for this ethical perspective among the writers may be seen in the nature and number of publications concerned with God's relationship to man and the universe.¹⁰ Besides the works of Milton and Bunyan, the sermons of Barrow, Tillotson, South, Stillingfleet, Burnet, and Bentley and the scientific and theological writings of Ray, Boyle, and Newton were among the most popular and influential works of the age. Irène Simon not only points out the influence of sermons on the educated public well into the eighteenth century, but also shows how "the printed versions alone have a right to be treated as a branch of literature" and how "any account of the temper or intellectual climate of the age that ignores these facts [about the importance of the sermons] is therefore bound to be distorted."¹¹ Edward Arber also points out that "it was the religious people first, and the Scientists next, that made the fortunes of the London Book Trade."¹² When Arber speaks of "Writers on Pure and Applied Science," he is referring to the scientists Cragg discusses: "The leading scientists of the period were for the most part earnest Christians, and they continually related their discoveries to a religious interpretation of the world."¹³ The works of all these writers share with the best Restoration drama what Aubrey Williams calls "the Renaissance Christian vision of human experience, however pale and faint it may have turned."¹⁴ To say, as many critics have, that the drama, and especially the comedy, lacks any moral concern, denies the existence of the Christian ethic as basic to the lives of

the Englishmen of the age. Such views also place the Restoration playwrights, who, as poets, traditionally have been seen as especially sensitive to man's nature and the ways it might be improved, outside the spirit of the times, engaged in writing which does not interest itself with the most fundamental attitudes of the age. Removing the plays from the issue of morality, as Zimbardo wishes to do, may simplify the analyses, but it does not produce a purely "literary" discussion of the plays.¹⁵ Indeed, there are not literary and moral issues for the seventeenth-century poet; there are literary issues which include the important moral issues of the times: the conduct of man on earth as it is related to his salvation and the role of Providence in man's life and the workings of the universe.¹⁶

The propensity on the part of modern critics to divorce Restoration drama from the moral vision of the age has produced judgments like John Palmer's that "Jeremy Collier invented the moral test."¹⁷ On the contrary, that traditional critical theory which existed in England (expressed by Sidney, Jonson, Rapin, Rymer, and Dryden, among others) always made clear the moral value of literature, specifically the drama. What Ben Ross Schneider calls "the Aristotelian-Horatian principle of utile dulci" was commonly asserted by the playwrights when they talked of the intention of their plays.¹⁸ Thus, when Collier attacked the stage, he was not setting completely new ground rules for criticism, nor were the responses to his attack nearly so weak as some modern critics would have us think.¹⁹ Without any convincing analysis, for example, Palmer sees Congreve's and Vanbrugh's responses to Collier as ineffectual because they accept Collier's standard as a basis for argument.²⁰ He also sees A Vindication of the Stage (1698) as the "nearest approach to

a competent defence of the dramatist" (though apparently still not "competent"), with no mention of John Dennis's The Usefulness of the Stage (1698), James Drake's The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd (1699), Edward Filmer's A Defence of Plays (1707), or Elkanah Settle's A Defence of Dramatick Poetry (1698) and A Farther Defence of Dramatick Poetry (1698). He probably fails to note these because they, like all the defenses of the stage during the controversy, met Collier on Collier's ground, that is, on the evaluation of art in terms of, rather than in spite of, its moral position. The difficulty of evaluating art apart from its moral intent may be seen in Palmer's definition:

Art is not primarily concerned with morality. It is not the aim or business of comedy to improve the world. . . . When we say that art is not primarily concerned with morality, we mean that in most cases (the exceptions prove the rule) an artist is first concerned with beautifully expressing something he has felt or seen. He endeavours to give local habitation and a name to a piece of life imaginatively realised. His art is fashioned in the heat of a desire to see life in shape and form. His impulse is not the impulse of a moralist to improve the world; it is the impulse of an artist to express it.²¹

Palmer does not seem to be sure of his contentions, for he finds it necessary to qualify his first assertion with "the exceptions prove the rule" and later states that "morality is his [the artist's] subject, though it is not his object." He also says that "the greatest artists are also those who have contributed most to the morality of the Commonwealth," and that "morality is an accident of the artist's accomplishment, though it is not the intention." His statements not only seem to hedge on the relationship of morality and art, but they contradict all the contemporary criticism I have located and therefore his own observation that "the poet's work [is] conditioned by the period in which he lives, the moral laws which his moods and characters

unconsciously obey." In fact, since he cites no sources for this theory of art, Palmer seems to be doing what he has accused other critics, especially Macaulay, of doing: looking at the drama of the late seventeenth century through the eyes (and critical values) of his own age. The modern critic, just as the seventeenth and eighteenth-century critic, must deal with Collier within the context of Collier's age, that is, within the context of a world with Christianity at its center as a way to view life and create art (which in Palmer's own words, represents "life in shape and form").

While it is certain that many of Collier's arguments in A Short View do not focus on important issues for all of the plays, the work unleashed a rash of publications which give us the most complete source of critical information about drama of the Restoration. The reactions to Collier's arguments indicate that no play in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries could neglect a moral function and escape criticism. There was an expectation by the general audience and critics (just as in the earlier drama in England) of a point of view which recognized a world contingent upon Divine order and which reflected God's just rewards and punishments as part of the moral code. Collier, himself, at least as he begins his Short View, suggests such a moral purpose:

The Business of Plays is to recommend Virtue, and discountenance Vice; To shew the Uncertainty of Humane Greatness, the suddain Turns of Fate, and the Unhappy Conclusions of Violence and Injustice: 'Tis to expose the Singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible, and to bring every Thing that is Ill under Infamy, and Neglect.²²

Of course, as defenders like Thomas D'Urfey, John Dennis, and Edward

Filmer point out, Collier went on to condemn the stage entirely.²³

Assuming, as Johannes Ballein indicates, that he changed his mind about the stage as he wrote his treatise,²⁴ at one point at least he actually felt the purpose of the stage was moral. This opinion certainly finds good critical company during the Restoration period (even though some critics, like Thomas Rymer, are very critical of contemporary and, at times, earlier drama).²⁵

A reexamination of the contemporary critical responses to Collier is necessary in order to establish a historical basis for any criticism of the drama. Sister Rose Anthony's catalogue of works related to the controversy, though deficient in critical commentary about the works, is extremely useful in understanding the types and number of responses.²⁶ From the various defenses of the Restoration stage she cites, I have organized three groups based upon how closely the defenders could be related to Collier's attack in A Short View: the first is made up of the responses of those playwrights who were attacked by Collier;²⁷ the second includes the reactions of playwrights who defended the stage though not individually attacked by Collier;²⁸ the final group includes defenses of the stage by individuals who were not primarily playwrights or who have remained anonymous.²⁹ Some overlapping exists since some of the anonymous writers may have been important playwrights and also since Dennis's major importance (at least today) is as a critic, not a playwright. I placed him in group two, however, because he did write six plays which were produced during the height of the controversy, aligning his interests more closely with the playwrights'. This grouping should prove useful in establishing the most valuable defenses of the stage. What will be shown is a consistency

of critical thought about the drama even though each group stands at a different distance from Collier's attack.

Though Collier chose to attack Otway, Wycherley, Dryden, Congreve, D'Urfey, and Vanbrugh, only the last four responded. Most critics feel that the defenses offered by Congreve, D'Urfey, and Vanbrugh are weak and that Dryden even agrees with Collier in the latter's judgment of him. But in all of these answers (though in Dryden's case there are complications), there is a basic concern for defending the moral value of the stage and especially the plays Collier has attacked. To fault these responses because they do not adequately answer all of Collier's assertions seems wrong, for as G. F. Lamb states, "Their task was an impossible one." He feels that Collier's document was not "intended to stimulate reasoned argument. Its aim was to heckle and victimize the dramatists and players."³⁰ What should be noted are the assumptions these writers make about their plays and the kind of corrections they attempt to bring about in Collier's readings. They are not as concerned with his general argument about immorality and profaneness as with the specific evidence he draws from their plays.³¹ Their defenses focus on specific characters or passages which Collier has misunderstood or misrepresented.

Though these defenses are obviously limited, however, they provide the kind of reply the more general responses to Collier usually lack, that is, proof that Collier had misused his evidence from the contemporary plays. They all stress their beliefs in the moral purpose of the drama,³² with Congreve going to somewhat elaborate lengths to define and defend comedy. In explaining Aristotle he states that "Men are to be laugh'd out of their Vices in Comedy; the Business of Comedy is to

- delight, as well as to instruct: And as vicious People are made
 asham'd of their Follies or Faults, by seeing them expos'd in a ridi-
 culous manner, so are good People at once both warn'd and diverted at
 their Expence."³³ A similarity between Congreve's definition and
 Dryden's earlier comments in his often partially quoted preface to An
Evening's Love: or the Mock Astrologer (1671) should be noted.³⁴ What
 Professor Krutch sees as Dryden's flat repudiation of "any responsi-
 bility of the dramatist to point a moral,"³⁵ is actually only part of an
 explanation based upon Dryden's premise that the poet's job is to work
 "a cure on folly, and the small imperfections of mankind."³⁶ Although
 this preface clarifies Dryden's distinction between tragedy and comedy,
 it does not remove moral instruction from the comic realm. In fact,
 Dryden goes to some trouble to explain how that instruction results
 from various factors in the play acting upon the audience. Vanbrugh,
 while he does not attempt to define comedy, does assert that "what I
 have done is in general a Discouragement to Vice and Folly; I am sure
 I intended it, and I hope I have performed it."³⁷ Likewise, D'Urfey
 affirms that the "Plots and designs" of his plays are intended to bring
 about "the depression of Vice and encouragement of Virtue."³⁸ Whether
 these playwrights accomplished their intended ends is still a hot
 critical issue, but one important prerequisite for judging the accom-
 plishments is an understanding of the plays themselves. Their responses
 at least offer not only evidence for their intentions but important
 corrections to Collier's readings (which will be taken up later) and
 his assumptions about drama. The value of these defenses surely should
 not be dismissed by any critic who hopes to interpret accurately the
 plays of the Restoration.

The second group of defenses includes both creative works (satiric dialogues, poems, and plays) and treatises and letters written by playwrights not directly attacked by Collier. The creative works in this group are similar to Dryden's "To My Friend, the Author [Peter Motteux]" in their rebuke of Collier as an overzealous clergyman and a misinformed critical authority of the drama. Collectively, these works are most important in showing how the playwrights felt about Collier's charges, though they offer less in the way of reasoned critical theory about the drama than do the argumentative responses of the treatises. Three full-length plays deal with Collier and his stage attacks: Charles Gildon's Stage-Beaux Toss'd in a Banket (1704),³⁹ Elkanah Settle's The City Ramble: or, Play-House Wedding (1711), and Colley Cibber's The Non-Juror (1718). Though these plays apparently had little effect (Gildon's play was not performed and Cibber's was not directed specifically at Collier), they do indicate a willingness by the other poets to put their energies into defending the stage. Other creative exercises include Thomas Brown's Letters from the Dead to the Living (1702) and A Legacy for the Ladies (1706), Gildon's The Post-Man Robb'd of His Mail (1719), Granville's epilogue to Jew of Venice (1701), Farquhar's humorous piece, The Adventures of Covent-Garden (1698), and Motteux's poem, "The Poet's Character of Himself" (1698).

Though all of these responses reflect important attitudes of the poets, and even present specific comments on the controversy and its participants,⁴⁰ the most useful arguments in favor of the stage come from the prose treatises of the playwrights. Some of these are prefaces or dedicatory epistles, such as Gildon's preface to Phaeton (1698) and Susanna Centlivre's preface to The Perjured Husband (1700),

while others are extended treatises, such as Settle's A Defence of Dramatick Poetry (1698) and Dennis's The Usefulness of the Stage (1698). Again, these playwrights consistently emphasize the moral function they see for drama in their critical remarks. Two important aspects of all of these responses are the outrage the playwrights feel at Collier's apparent desire to end all drama in England and their fear that his zeal would excite others.⁴¹ The fear seems to result from Collier's desire to abolish the stage by using a moral argument. These writers knew the importance of the moral conscience of the people and the king, and though they were willing to grant that abuses existed, they could not accept Collier's conclusions or much of his evidence. That they chose to argue with Collier on moral grounds is not due to a lack of ability in argument nor to an inability to understand the drama. Rather, they were aware that any viable art form in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries must have a moral base, that part of the artist's power rested in his moral vision and the expression of that vision. What this meant for the dramatist was an expectation by audiences and readers (and certainly by critics and other dramatists) of decency and recognizable moral patterns or conditions in their plays. Gildon, for example, says that "No Man wou'd be more glad to see all Indecencies driven from the English Stage, than my self," but he also indicates that "the Wit of Man can invent no way so efficacious, as Dramatic Poetry, to advance Virtue and Wisdom."⁴² In the epistle dedicatory to The Patriot (1703) he explains more fully how "Dramatick Poetry" is "the most effectual Way, the Wit of Man can invent for the Advancement of Virtue; It attraques a Man in his Gayer hours, by generous Instructions, convey'd with Pleasure; turns our Diversions from

Folly, and makes them subservient to our improvement, and by that means robs Vice of our looser Hours." Peter Motteux, likewise, indicates that reform is necessary but not complete suppression, "For certainly they [plays] might be of very great use, not only for the Diversion and Pleasure, but also for the correction and information of Mankind."⁴³ Farquhar, in A Discourse Upon Comedy (1702), is intent upon showing that the "End" of comedy is moral, and that if the English authors "have left Vice unpunish'd, Vertue unrewarded, Folly unexpos'd, or Prudence unsuccessful . . . let them be lash'd to some purpose."⁴⁴

Elkanah Settle considers most of Collier's arguments in detail and is in agreement with Collier's initial desire for a regulated stage:

I shall join farther with Mr. Collier, and heartily wish, that both the Levity of Expression, and the too frequent Choice of Debauch'd Characters, in our Comedies, were retrench'd, and mended: That also the Prize in the Comedy might be always given to some deserving Vertue that wins it; and consequently, our Comedies, even Fiction it self, might be made more Instructive, By Poetick Justice, in rewarding and crowning the Vertuous Characters with the Success in the Drama.⁴⁵

But Settle is quick to show, through evidence and critical theory, how wrong Collier has been in his judgment. Besides defending plays like The Old Bachelor, Amphitryon, and The Relapse, which Collier had attacked, he says that tragedy's "chief work is to raise Compassion" and explains how it is, therefore, instructive:

And what is it we pity there [in a tragedy], but the Distresses, Calmities and Ruins of Honour, Loyalty, Fidelity or Love, &c. represented in some True or Fictitious, Historick or Romantick Subject of the Play? Thus Virtue, like Religion by its Martyrdom, is rendred more shining by its Sufferings, and the Impression we receive from Tragedy, is only making us in Love with Virtue, (for Pity is a little kin to Love) and out of Love with Vice; for at the same time we pity the

suffering Virtue, it raises our Aversions and Hate to the Treachery or Tyranny in the Tragedy, from whence and by whom that Virtue suffers.⁴⁶

Such an attempt to explain the effects of tragedy certainly comes from a thoughtful approach to the ends of drama by a writer familiar with the process of creating it. In trying to explain Aristotle's "pity" in terms of instructive religion, which most Christians would certainly understand, one example of the artistic vision of the Restoration is expressed. In the same way Settle explains that in comedy the playwright must "range the Town . . . for the Follies, the Vices, the Vanities and the Passions of Mankind, which we meet with every Day." Then, acting as a "satyrists," the playwright's job is to expose the fools on stage and improve all except those whose "Opticks" are too "perverse and deprav'd" to "see themselves there."⁴⁷

Finally, John Dennis, whose defenses rival Collier's attacks in number, adds his critical clout to the playwrights' theories about the drama by saying "That the Drama, and Particularly Tragedy, in its Purity, is so far from having that Effect [encouragement of vice], that it must of necessity make Man Virtuous."⁴⁸ Dennis is careful to note that the drama had the potential to "make Men Virtuous," but for him and those defending the stage, this potential was enough to preserve it and its best products:

It must be acknowledg'd there are Corruptions which are crept into our Theatres, for into what Human Inventions will not Corruptions creep, since it is plain that they insensibly creep into Religion which is of Divine establishment; but 'twould be a monstrous Conclusion, that because of the Corruptions of the Church of Rome, reveal'd Religion ought to be suppressed, and men to turn Deists or Atheists.⁴⁹

Though both of these comments come in the context of heated criticism of Collier (the first, in response to A Short View; the second, in

response to Mr. Collier's Dissuasive from the Play-House (1703), Dennis's remarks in An Essay on the Opera's After the Italian Manner (1706) show that his belief in the necessity and value of the stage was a carefully considered critical opinion rather than a self-interested outburst in response to severe attack. In asserting the "Importance of the Stage to the Publick," he says

That the Drama, of all reasonable Diversions, is the best that has ever been invented, at once to delight and instruct the World; that it has never flourish'd but in Three or Four of the bravest Nations that have been since the World began, and that in the most flourishing States of those Nations; and that a People must have a very good share of Virtue, as well as Understanding, before they can receive it among them.⁵⁰

Dennis's comments about man's need for diversion and the relationship between patriotism and drama are more complex than those of the other playwrights, but like the others he constantly notes the importance of moral instruction as a necessary end to any play.

From the arguments of these playwrights comes what should be considered a fundamental critical standard for Restoration drama, that is, that one major purpose of that drama is moral instruction. And though the expression of these arguments was probably encouraged by Collier, as were the responses of playwrights Collier attacked directly, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the defenders, as some modern critics have.⁵¹ Rather than assuming that these critical statements are fabrications, it seems more reasonable to assume that they are honest evaluations and proceed to see if they are consistent with the world-view which the best poets presented in their works. The moral intentions related in the criticism of these contemporary dramatists also helps us understand why Collier's judgments of the plays were so erroneous.

The final group I have established is perhaps the most important, but because of its nature, some caution will be necessary in discussing the works included here. One problem arises in that this group is comprised of responses from anonymous writers, and also from known critics who are not primarily playwrights. Obviously, it is possible that some of the anonymous writers are playwrights, but my assumption is that in those cases they have not wished to be identified in the controversy and therefore may be evaluated from the more objective stance they tried to establish. Also, though John Oldmixon, James Drake, and Edward Filmer wrote plays, they certainly could not be considered major playwrights of the period.⁵² Of these only Filmer puts his name to his defense of the stage, again perhaps indicating the wish of these critics to dissociate themselves from the playwrights in acting as critics.⁵³ The authors of the remaining works have not been identified and thus seem to fulfill the criteria for this final group.

Not only do all the critics in this group find value in the drama, but their arguments are consistent with those of the playwrights in groups one and two while going beyond many of them (Dennis's are exceptions) to suggest important critical concepts for understanding the drama of the Restoration. The shortest piece of this group exposes, but does not develop, important critical points. Visits from the Shades: or, Dialogues Serious, Comical, and Political (1704) includes as its first dialogue a conversation between Jo Hains's ghost and Jeremy Collier. Hains was the actor who had gotten into the controversy earlier by writing the prologue and epilogue to Farquhar's Love and a Bottle (1699). One important observation his ghost makes in this

dialogue is that the stage is not responsible for the vice which exists in England:

If the Stage was overturn'd, I question whether the People wou'd not be as Vicious as they are. The 3d. part of the Kingdom are Strangers to the Theatre, yet their Proficiency in Immorality is of as large a size as the frequenters of the Drama. . . . There is a Pravity woven in the Constitution of Mankind, which neither the force of Religion nor the Power of Precept can expel.⁵⁴

Here the author not only counters Collier's assertion that the stage causes, rather than reflects, vice, but he also expresses what Fussell has called the Christian humanists' belief about the corrupt nature of man.⁵⁵ Ironically, as will be shown later, Collier seemed to reject the Christian tenet concerning the flawed nature of man, while this defender makes it clear that he is very much aware of man's natural, immoral state. More important, however, is the expression of confidence in drama as a way to help and improve man: "Just Plays and good Poets are so far from destructive to a publick Community, that they hold up the Balance of good Manners, and dare speak when the Pulpits are silent."⁵⁶

Another earlier response to Collier, The Stage Acquitted (1699), makes use of the dialogue format (between Fairly and Lovetruth) and focuses on the roles of the stage and the pulpit in providing moral instruction. The author believes that "the Stage does not presume to stand in Competition with the Pulpit, in that peculiar and sacred advantage of teaching the Mystery of Faith, but only pretends to be subservient to it in the other arm of the Pulpit's duty, the Improvement and Regulation of our Manners."⁵⁷ It is not a matter of the playwright replacing the preacher but of the playwright aiding the preacher in his

attempt to teach men the way to salvation. Though the message may be the same, the medium is different, and this difference justifies the need for the stage:

We have an English Proverb, Forewarn'd, forearm'd; 'tis a sort of Antichristian barbarity to deny poor heedless unguarded youth so timely a warning. Oh but, say you the Pulpit will give this warning much better, and with less danger. That is evidently false, for first the Pulpit barely tells you that there are such things, and that they are to be avoided, but leaves you yet in the dark what they are . . . while the Stage draws you the picture to the life, gives you so many Characteristic marks, by shewing their practice and their deceits, their Hypocrisies, and gaudy outsides, that one must be very blind indeed, that is not instructed to know 'em where-ever they are seen; the Stage exposing their Tricks teaches to avoid their imposition; for 'tis impossible to escape them without so perfect a description of their rogueries.

This passage emphasizes just how moral instruction is achieved: by drawing the "picture to the life" of man's vices and follies. In likening the ends of both stage and pulpit this critic is careful to give to the preacher the "serious hours to inculcate its [Pulpit's] Doctrines," while reserving the "hours of pleasure" for the poet to present "useful precepts and examples in the midst of our diversion."⁵⁸ Other arguments concerning the appearance of vice, the opinions of Church fathers, and poetic justice are presented in this rather lengthy response to Collier and will be referred to in later chapters.

A very similar critical stance, though presented in a much briefer form, is the anonymous, A Letter to A. H. Esq.; Concerning the Stage (1698). Here the author also points out that certain types of wickedness cannot decently be reprov'd from the pulpit but are best corrected through precept and example on the stage. He is insistent about the danger of man's "minding too much the Business of the World"

or "the Pleasures of it; both of them are to be kept within bounds, and both subservient to Religion." For the good of the individual as well as the state he says that "some publick Exercise" is necessary to regulate men's passions. For him, the theatre fulfills this purpose:

We are there instructed to Love, Hate, and Fear within measure, how we may be men without debasing our Souls; and all this by moving Examples, which in spite of stubbornness, will force its [sic] Impressions; and 'tis our own Fault if they are not lasting. This certainly must recommend the Stage to the Vertuous; and Piety can't be offended at the decent reprov'g of Vice, and the insinuating recommendation of Vertue.⁵⁹

This critic goes beyond mere statements of praise or blame to an explanation of how the play is to work on the emotions of the audience, making it quite obvious that each member of that audience has a responsibility to exercise his moral judgment while seeing the play and to apply what he has learned once he leaves the playhouse. His belief in the importance of examples on stage, which not only reflect life but provide useful guidance for the lives of those who see and read the plays, is apparent in his understanding of tragedy and comedy: "In short, 'tis the Property both of Tragedy and Comedy to instruct: The Characters in both are to be Natural; and the Persons concern'd in the whole Action, are to be such whose Vertues ought to deter us from imitating their Example." In making this statement he has already made it clear that tragedy proves "that Vice never goes unpunished; and that true Happiness does not chiefly consist in the Enjoyment of this World," while comedy exposes "the Faults of Particular Men in order to correct the Faults of the Publick . . . thro' a fear of being expos'd."⁶⁰ The moral effect of the play was every bit as important to this critic as to Collier; Collier, however, had far less confidence in the judgment

and understanding of the audience, perhaps because he was meted out such a small quantity of these qualities himself.

Another anonymous defender of the stage stresses the importance of the exposure of "the measures and folly" of vices, for "had they never been expos'd, they had still been your [audience's] Darling Companions, tho' all the Pulpits in Town had thunder'd never so loudly against them. For as the Divine Herbert says, A verse may find him who a Sermon flies, And Turn Delight into a Sacrifice."⁶¹ The opportunity for instruction apart from the pulpit was based upon the recognition that men had need for diversion and pleasure involving stimulation, within limits, of their emotions. Thus, critics stated that plays could supplement the sermons by providing instructive diversions, and they provided extended critical arguments showing how instruction took place. This vindicator, for example, explains the usefulness of tragedy:

Which is so manifest, that I wonder anyone can question it, who considers how well adapted it is to the Intentions of Human Life, Profit, and Delight. Who can express the charms of a well wrought Scene lively Represented? The Motions of the Actor Charm our Souls, and mixes [sic] with our very Blood and Spirits, so that we are carry'd by an irresistible, but pleasing violence into the very Passion we behold. What Heart can forbear relenting to see an unfortunate Person, for some unhappy mistakes in his Conduct, fall into irreparable Misfortunes? This strikes deep into our Breasts, by a tender insinuation steals into our Souls, and draws a Pity from us; so consequently making us ready to assist all that we meet with in a like Condition: it teaches us to Judge Charitably of the Miserable, when we see a small Error ignorantly committed, may be the cause of heavy Misfortunes; it teaches us at the same time Caution, and Circumspection in the Management of our selves. And who that sees a Vicious Person severely Punish'd, will not tremble at Vice? . . . and if Tragedy scares us out of our Vices, Comedy will no less shame us out of our Follies. Tragedy, like a severe Master, keeps a heavy hand over us; but Comedy, like an indulgent Parent, mixes something to please when it

reproves. Who can forbear blushing, that sees some Darling Folly expos'd? And tho' its ridiculousness tickles him into a laughter, yet at the same time, he feels a secret shame for the Guilt.⁶²

In detailing the learning process of the audience, this critic both establishes poetic intent and expresses a confidence (not shared by Collier) in the moral judgment of that audience. As the writer of Some Remarks upon Mr. Collier's Defence of his Short View of the English Stage (1698) states, "It appears Mr. Collier has a very mean Opinion of the Capacity of the Audience, when he conceives all the Poets Flights will so far affect them as to practice the same; like Don Quixote, who cou'd not read Romances, but he must turn Knight-Errant."⁶³

John Oldmixon takes Collier to task in a series of dialogues entitled Reflections on the Stage, and Mr. Collyer's Defence of the Short View (1699). Though many of Oldmixon's arguments concern specific plays, language and characters on the stage, and the nature of Collier's attack (all of which will be taken up later), he bases his critical theory of drama on moral grounds. After allowing that there is need for reform of the stage,⁶⁴ he argues that the best dramatic art must be moral: "This is certain, no Poet ever err'd against Manners or Religion, but 'twas at the expence of his Art; those who know nothing of it can't help erring, for which reason they are not to be endur'd. But the Masters of the Science will observe its precepts which them confine, never to please, but in order to instruct."⁶⁵ Oldmixon also translates Moliere's preface to L'Imposture to represent his own feelings about the function of comedy. In part, Moliere states that "'the most excellent treatises of Morality, are often less powerful than the strokes of Satyr. Nothing reproves the greatest part of Mankind more than pointing

their defects. 'Tis a great mortification to Vice to be expos'd to the laughter of the world. One can easily enough bear with reproof, but can't endure raillery, and most men had rather be thought wicked than ridiculous.'"66

A somewhat broader defense is Edward Filmer's A Defence of Plays (1707), which includes suggestions for reforming the stage.

Filmer, like most of the defenders, admits to "many great Abuses" of the stage, but unlike the other defenders, he gives credit to Collier as "a Person of great Parts, and good Learning" and also readily admits some disagreement with Dennis and Congreve about the importance of plays.⁶⁷

In addition, he agrees with Collier (and thereby disagrees with at least two other defenders of the stage⁶⁸) in his desire to keep "anything that is either Sacred in it self, or by Custom appropriated to sacred Uses" off the Stage.⁶⁹ But even with these "softened" attitudes toward Collier, he comes down hard on the violent attacks which he feels are unwarranted in light of his belief in the moral value of the plays:

"My concern to see the Stage so violently assaulted on the one hand, and so strangely deserted on the other, was that which first tempted me to engage in the Defence of a Diversion, which I always thought might be so managed, as to be not only innocent but useful." He goes on to point out that his disagreement with other defenders of the stage is limited, for he is still "of the Opinion, that Plays may very well be allow'd, and that in a Christian Commonwealth too; as a Diversion not only innocent, but instructive, such a one indeed, as may rather contribute very much to the Promotion of Virtue, than any way countenance or incourage Vice."⁷⁰ Because Filmer believes that the "great and chief End [of plays] ever was, and still is, Instruction," he argues

throughout for the importance of "Stage-Discipline" (poetic justice) as an artistic tool of the poet and a characteristic of the plays readily recognized by the audience. Had Collier understood "Stage-Discipline," he might have found that the contemporary plays fulfilled the moral intent he himself saw for drama in A Short View (p. 1).

James Drake presents perhaps the best defense of the stage in The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd (1699). Here, he not only refutes many of Collier's arguments and much of his evidence, he lays down some of the most important critical tenets of Restoration drama. He is very conscious of the play as a work of art created by the playwright to fulfill specific artistic purposes.⁷¹ He is also well aware of the emotional and intellectual effects of the play upon an audience, assuming that the audience is capable of reacting emotionally and intellectually. He agrees with the other defenders of the stage about the moral purpose of plays and sees "modern" drama as far more successful at accomplishing that purpose than ancient drama. He says that Collier gives

the World a false alarm, and endeavours to set 'em upon those as Subverters of Religion and Morality, that have with abundance of art and pains labour'd in their service, and rack'd their Inventions to Weave 'em into the most popular diversions and make even Luxury and Pleasure subservient and instrumental to the establishment of Moral Principles, and the confirmation of Virtuous Resolutions.⁷²

In trying to show that many of the modern playwrights had achieved this moral end, Drake carefully distinguishes between tragedy, which attempts to control the passions, and comedy, which works on vice, folly, and affectation. He explains tragedy and comedy by discussing

the moral "Parts" of a play:

The Parts therefore of a Play, in which the Morals of the Play appear, are the Fable, the Characters, and the Discourse. Of these the Fable (in Tragedy especially) is the most considerable . . . and the principal Instrument by which the Passions are weeded and purg'd, by laying before the Eyes of the Spectators examples of the miserable Catastrophe of Tyranny, Usurpation, Pride, Cruelty, and Ambition, &c. and to crown suffering Virtue with Success and Reward, or to punish the unjust Oppressors of it with Ruine and Destruction.

In a similar manner comedy corrects "Knaves, Misers, Sots, Coquets, Fops, Jilts and Cullies . . . by rendring 'em unsuccessful, and submitting them in her Fable, to the Practices and Stratagems of others, after such a manner, as to expose both Knavery, Vanity, and Affectation, in the conclusion, or winding up." Drake feels that the audience will heap their "Scorn and Derision" upon these vain, affected fools by seeing how ridiculous they appear on stage. In this way comedy "stops the contagion, and prevents the imitation more effectually than even Philosophy herself."⁷³ The "Fable" (plot or 'story) is important to Drake because it employs poetic justice and expresses the "Moral," which he calls "the highest, and the most serviceable improvement that ever was, or ever can be made of the Drama."⁷⁴ His effort throughout this work is to show that the moral aspect of plays is of "Modern Extraction" and particularly part of the tradition of English Drama, and therefore strongly evident in the plays Collier attacks. He is persistent in his attempts to prove what he says by discounting Collier, citing and explaining his own examples, and stressing fundamental principles of drama. As this sample of his ideas shows, there was no way to separate good art from moral art, for the foundation of good art was Christian morality.

Thus, it is apparent that writers in all three of these groups chose to recognize the moral purpose of the drama as basic to any critical understanding of it. Upon this point their defenses agreed with Collier and established the contemporary grounds for the critical controversy. But for the defenders of the stage, the best playwrights of the Restoration period wove their Christian ethic into the fabric of their plays, to be enjoyed, evaluated, and used by those who were capable of judging the beauty, lasting quality, and utility of the material. That the defenders and Collier (along with other attackers) parted ways comes as no surprise when Collier's arguments and interpretations are examined; his views provided ample opportunity for sharp critical reactions which should further our understanding of those "smutty" Restoration plays.

NOTES

¹Rather ironically, there seems to be an acceptance of (and, therefore, perhaps less interest in) the moral nature of tragedy. However, Eric Rothstein's recent ideas about poetic justice in his book, Restoration Tragedy: Form and the Process of Change (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), exemplify a rather confusing view of the moral perspective which modern critics see in tragedy. For a discussion see Aubrey Williams' article, "Poetical Justice, the Contrivances of Providence, and the Works of William Congreve," ELH, 35(1968), 541 & 546-547.

²George Farquhar (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 58.

³The Comedy of Manners (1931; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), p. 282.

⁴The First Modern Comedies: The Significance of Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 3-4. Holland also cites modern critics who, in his estimation, regard Restoration comedy as amoral (p. 259n.): Malcolm Elwin, The Playgoer's Handbook to Restoration Drama; Henry H. Adams and Baxter Hathaway, Dramatic Essays of the Neoclassic Age; Bartholow V. Crawford, "High Comedy in Terms of Restoration Practice," PQ, 8(1929); and Willard Smith, The Nature of Comedy. Ben Ross Schneider, Jr. says in his book, The Ethos of Restoration Comedy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 4, that "the amoral line of criticism runs from [Charles] Lamb through John Palmer . . . to Kathleen Lynch (The Social Mode in Restoration Comedy, New York, 1926).

⁵Wycherley's Drama: A Link in the Development of English Satire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 1. L. C. Knights makes the same kind of separation between "'morals'" and literary criticism in "Restoration Comedy: The Reality and the Myth," Explorations (London, 1946); rpt. in Restoration Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. John Loftis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 4.

⁶Comedy and Conscience, after the Restoration (1924; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), p. 44. Also see p. 86.

⁷From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought within the Church of England 1660 to 1700 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 91.

⁸The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 3-10.

⁹Fussell, pp. 11, 5, 8, 9, & 7.

¹⁰Edward Arber, The Term Catalogues, 1668-1709 A.D. with a Number for Easter Term, 1711 A.D., III (London: Edward Arber, 1906), vii. Arber says that, based on the writings, the "Age was eminently a sober one. The general tone of its books was deeply religious; mingled with much philosophical Enquiry, and deep research into Nature."

¹¹Irène Simon, Three Restoration Divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson, Selected Sermons (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1967), I, i, v, iv.

¹²Arber, III, vii.

¹³Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, p. 99.

¹⁴Williams, "Poetical Justice," 544. Professor Williams makes this observation in connection with his argument that the works of William Congreve demonstrate "a providential order in human event that is fully analogous to the greater world of providential order insisted upon not only by contemporary Anglican theologians but also insisted upon by contemporary literary critics as a fundamental dramatic principle."

¹⁵Zimbardo, p. 1. An equally inaccurate view of morality has been presented recently by Virginia Odgen Birdsall, in Wild Civility: The English Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 8. She maintains that Restoration comic heroes (and heroines) "create their own morality, which has little to do with conventional morals Confronted with a world which lacks any sense of cosmic orderliness and abstract moral certainty and which has committed itself to civilized forms largely derivative and hollow, they make their spirit prevail." To see a "new morality" outside orthodox literary and Christian tradition being espoused in plays which the authors themselves see as orthodox in an age fundamentally in agreement with the Christian world-view neglects much contemporary evidence and requires, I think, creative readings of the plays.

¹⁶Schneider, p. viii. Professor Schneider points out that his view of Restoration comedy as representative of the Christian ethic has been difficult to fit "into the existing structures of ideas on the subject."

¹⁷Palmer, p. 5.

¹⁸Schneider, pp. 4-12.

¹⁹Palmer, pp. 7-9 & 284-285. Krutch, Comedy and Conscience, pp. 122-124 & 127ff. Also, Krutch, ed., "Preface to The Campaigners (1698)," Publications of the Augustan Reprint Society, 3rd series, No. 12 (March, 1948), intro., pp. 1-4. Charles Stonehill, ed., The Complete Works of George Farquhar (Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1930), II, 443n.

²⁰Palmer, pp. 280 & 282.

²¹Ibid., pp. 288-289 & 291.

²²A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, Together with a Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument (London, 1698), p. 1.

²³The Campaigners (London, 1698), preface, p. 2; The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), 146; A Defence of Plays (London, 1707), pp. 4-5.

²⁴Jeremy Collier's Angriff auf de englishe Bühne, cited by W. Heldt, "A Chronological and Critical Review of the Appreciation and Condemnation of the Comic Dramatists of the Restoration and Orange Periods," Neophilologus, 8 (1923), 46.

²⁵The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer, ed. Curt A. Zimansky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 18.

²⁶The Jeremy Collier Stage Controversy 1698-1726 (1937; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), pp. 296-297.

²⁷Though Dryden did not write a complete response to Collier, he criticizes his attack in each of the following: "Poetical Epistle to Peter Motteux" prefixed to Beauty in Distress (London, 1698), the preface to Fables Ancient and Modern (London, 1700), "Cymon and Iphigenia" (ll. 1-41) in Fables, and the epilogue to The Pilgrim (London, 1700). D'Urfey responded in a rather long preface to The Campaigners and later in the prologue and epilogue to The Old Mode and the New (London, 1709). Congreve responded with his Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations (London, 1698), and Vanbrugh answered with his A Short Vindication of "The Relapse" and "The Provok'd Wife," from Immorality and Profaneness (London, 1698).

²⁸Peter Motteux responded by including Father Caffaro's letter, Dryden's "Poetical Epistle," his own poem, "The Poet's Character of Himself," and a critical prologue and epilogue with his play, Beauty in Distress. Charles Gildon defended the stage in the preface to Phaeton (London, 1698), The Stage-Beaux Toss'd in a Blanket (London, 1704), the dedicatory epistle to The Patriot (London, 1703), and The Post-Man Robb'd of His Mail (London, 1719). Dennis took part in the controversy with The Usefulness of the Stage (London, 1698), A Person of Quality's Answer to Mr. Collier's Letter (London, 1704), An Essay on the Operas After the Italian Manner (London, 1706), and The Stage Defended (London, 1726). Elkanah Settle showed his support for the stage with A Defence of Dramatick Poetry (London, 1698), A Farther Defence of Dramatick Poetry (London, 1698), and The City-Ramble (London, 1711). Susanna Centlivre spoke briefly to Collier and other unqualified critics of the stage in the preface, prologue, and epilogue to The Perjured Husband (London,

1700). Colley Cibber defended the stage in the dedicatory epistle to Love Makes a Man (London, 1700), the prologue to Xerxes (London, 1699), and An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber (London, 1740); he also may have had Collier in mind in his play, The Non-Juror (London, 1718). George Granville supported the stage in the epilogue to The Jew of Venice (London, 1701). George Farquhar defended the stage in The Adventures of Covent Garden (London, 1698), A Discourse Upon Comedy (London, 1702), and the preface to The Twin Rivals (London, 1702). Thomas Brown struck at Collier in Letters from the Dead to the Living (London, 1702) and A Legacy for the Ladies (London, 1706). Thomas Baker responded in the dedicatory epistle to An Act at Oxford (London, 1704).

²⁹The anonymous defenses of the stage include: A Letter to A. H. Esq.; Concerning the Stage (London, 1698), A Vindication of the Stage (London, 1698), The Immorality of the English Pulpit (London, 1698), Some Remarks Upon Mr. Collier's Defence of His Short View of the English Stage (London, 1698), The Stage Acquitted (London, 1699), Visits from the Shades (London, 1704), and Concio Laici (London, 1704). In addition, John Oldmixon responded in Reflections on the Stage (London, 1699); James Drake answered in The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd (London, 1699); and Edward Filmer tried to correct Collier in A Defence of Plays (London, 1707).

³⁰"A Short View of Jeremy Collier," English, 7(1949), 271.

³¹Congreve, in his Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations, in The Complete Works of William Congreve, ed. Montague Summers (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1923), III, 171, says that he has "no Intention to examine all the Absurdities and Falsehoods in Mr. Collier's Book." D'Urfey spends nearly half of his defense in the preface to The Campaigners discussing his play, Don Quixote. Vanbrugh, in his Vindication, in The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, eds. Bonamy Dobrée and Geoffrey Webb (Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1927), I, 195-196, feels that his personal morals are in question and limits his defense to those attacks on his plays. And Dryden, who makes a defense while saying he will not in his preface to Fables, in Dryden's Of Dramatic Poesy and other Critical Essays, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1962), II, 293, says "Yet it were not difficult to prove that in many places he has perverted my meaning by his glosses, and interpreted my words into blasphemy and bawdry of which they were not guilty."

³²Dryden, though he answers Collier only briefly, criticizes the "religious lawyer" in his poetic epistle to Motteux and then defends the moral purpose of tragedy:

The moral part at least we may divide,

Humility reward, and punish pride:

Ambition, Int'rest, Avarice accuse:

These are the Province of a Tragic Muse. (ll. 27-30)

This purpose is also stated in Dryden's "The Grounds of Criticism in

Tragedy" (1679), in Essays, I, 245-246, and his preface to Tyrannic Love (1670), in Essays, I, 138-139.

³³Works, III, 173. His definition continues on 174.

³⁴Essays, I, 146-147 & 151-152. Also important in arriving at an accurate view of Dryden's moral intention in comedy is "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence," in Essays, I, 199.

³⁵Comedy and Conscience, p. 43.

³⁶Essays, I, 152.

³⁷Works, I, 195.

³⁸The Campaigners, preface, p. 3.

³⁹Though many critics have identified this play as Thomas Brown's, James Fullerton Arnott and John William Robinson cite a presentation copy which proves Gildon to be the author. English Theatrical Literature 1559-1900: A Bibliography (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1970), p. 46.

⁴⁰An example is Farquhar's The Adventures of Covent-Garden, in Works, II, 207, which refers to the "Battle between the Church and the Stage" and mentions Collier, Vanbrugh, Congreve, Settle, Dryden, and Wycherley.

⁴¹Dennis, Critical Works, I, 309. Here, in The Person of Quality's Answer to Mr. Collier's Letter (1704), Dennis attacks both the zeal and the danger of Collier's methods.

⁴²Phaeton, preface.

⁴³Beauty in Distress, p. ix.

⁴⁴Works, II, 343.

⁴⁵A Farther Defence, p. 63.

⁴⁶A Defence, pp. 71-72.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 80 & 82.

⁴⁸Critical Works, I, 153.

⁴⁹Ibid., 309.

⁵⁰Ibid., 382.

⁵¹John Harold Wilson, A Preface to Restoration Drama (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 120. Also, Sarup Singh, The Theory of Drama in the Restoration Period (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1963), pp. 238-239.

⁵²Oldmixon wrote Amintas (1698), The Grove or, Love's Paradise (1700) [this was an opera], the first act of The Novelty (1697) which was entitled Thyrsis: A Pastoral, and The Governor of Cyprus (1703). Filmer wrote The Unnatural Brother (1697) which Motteux adapted and called The Unfortunate Couple and used as the fourth act of The Novelty. Drake wrote The Sham Lawyer; or, The Lucky Extravagant (1697). From the performance information in The London Stage, none of these plays could be considered successful.

⁵³Evidence for this view may include Settle's attempt to enter the controversy as an anonymous critic, feeling that his position as a major playwright would make his defenses look less objective to the reader.

⁵⁴pp. 2-3.

⁵⁵Fussell, pp. 8 & 70ff.

⁵⁶Visits, p. 9.

⁵⁷p. 82.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 76-77 & 86-87.

⁵⁹pp. 18 & 17.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 16 & 15.

⁶¹A Vindication of the Stage (London, 1698), p. 15.

⁶²*Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

⁶³p. 9.

⁶⁴pp. 97, 100 & 165.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 167. Oldmixon also says "that a good Poet must write like a good man, because he is to instruct as well as please" (p. 88).

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

⁶⁷pp. 2-3.

⁶⁸The Stage Acquitted, p. 69 and A Vindication of the Stage, p. 13.

⁶⁹Filmer, p. 64.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, preface (The entire preface is in italics, which I have removed in my quotations,) & p. 3.

⁷¹pp. 117-118. Drake compares the poet and the painter in their attempts to follow nature and points out, in part, that "a Comick Poet can't trespass against the Laws of Morality in this nature, without offending against the Laws of his own Art."

⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 120 & 224.

⁷³*Ibid.*, pp. 123 & 122.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

CHAPTER II
ARTISTRY AND JUDGMENT: TEACHING VIRTUE BY EXPOSING VICE

For Collier, as for others, the theatres were veritable Synagogues of Satan, to be entered by Christians only at the greatest risk to their souls. Who would dare attend these gathering places of vice, where the appearance, language, and actions of the characters, not to mention the themes of the plays, were intended to imperil men's souls by enticing them toward sin and turning them away from God? What danger a playhouse afforded:

[It is] a Place where Thinking is out of Doors, and Seriousness Impertinent. Here our Reason is apt to be surpris'd and our Caution disarm'd; Here Vice stands upon Prescription, and Lewdness claims Privilege to Solicit. Nay, the very Parade, the Gaity, and Pleasure of the Company, is not without its danger: These Circumstances heightned with Luscious Dialogue, lively Action, and airy Musick are very likely to make an unserviceable Impression. . . . If we sit in the Seat of the Scornfull, and make Wickedness our Diversion, Providence we may be sure will withdraw, and leave us to the Government of another Influence.¹

Collier's Platonic fear that man will be "disarm'd" and debauched at the playhouse comes partly from not knowing man (at least as the Christian humanists knew him) and partly from not understanding the plays. He does not even allow the audience the same ability he feels he has: to see, to judge, and to reject the "evil" stage. The reason, probably, is that the audience was not rejecting the stage, for while they saw evil presented there, their judgment, like the playwrights', could separate good from evil; the baby need not go out with the dirty bath water.

From these critics who could judge the plays, a theory of drama begins to emerge in their responses to Collier's attitudes about the presentation of characters on stage. These responses show that Collier's thoughts about characterizations as well as his corollary discussions of the nature of man and Christian morality are literary and religious aberrations which have, unfortunately, dominated much thinking about Restoration drama for nearly three centuries. Collier's opinions triggered similar and at times even more unorthodox views of the stage from the pens of journalist George Ridpath and clergymen Arthur Bedford and William Law during his own time.² His influence later affected critics like Samuel Johnson and Thomas Macaulay in their reactions to Restoration drama.³ More recently critics have accepted Collier's label of the plays as immoral, but have either tried to justify the immorality (usually as reflective of the times) or to dismiss it as an unimportant consideration in understanding or evaluating the plays.⁴ By yielding to Collier, all of these reactions fail to recognize the proper moral purpose and success of the drama. Hopefully, by examining Collier's observations of character (especially as related to immoral or profane language or actions) in light of his contemporary critics, the weaknesses of Collier's dramatic theory and the strengths, including the moral intentions, of the best Restoration playwrights will be obvious.

In setting out to prove that "nothing has gone farther in Debauching the Age than the Stage-Poets, and the Play-House," Collier says he will first examine "the Rankness and indecency of their [the poets'] Language."⁵ But before he begins any examination of language, he cites characters from no fewer than ten plays as a "large Collection

of Debauchery." Most of his specific examples here are women who are forced to "speak Smuttily" by the poets, and thus exhibit the immodesty which he finds so offensive. Throughout A Short View he badgers female characters and members of the audience, as well as actresses, for not exhibiting that "Modesty" which he says "is the distinguishing Virtue of that Sex, and serves both for Ornament and Defence: Modesty was design'd by Providence as a Guard to Virtue."⁶ He goes on to call modesty natural, "wrought into the Mechanism of the Body" as a kind of "Intuitive knowledge," which responds to indecency "by sudden Instinct and Aversion." To this comment Edward Filmer later responded: "I ever looked upon the great Modesty of the generality of our Women, to have been the happy Effect rather of a pious, careful, and wary Education, than of any thing in the Contexture of their Bodies."⁷ But Collier's observation that modesty is an instinctive "Mechanism" which guards the natural virtue of women is consistent with his view of man's nature and the danger of the stage. Ironically, though, his view of women certainly shows no dependence on the anti-feminist attitudes of many of the Church Fathers who are such valuable authorities for him later in A Short View. They, of course, saw women as descendants of Eve, and consequently closely linked to Satan (through deceit and lust) as instrumental in man's fall. But for Collier the Fathers' emphasis on original sin could only weaken his position that women are corrupted by the theatre.

These comments on the modesty of woman reveal one aspect of Collier's theory of drama: strict social decorum in stage presentations. Not only is he against presentations which are offensive to the ears of

women; he is opposed to any criticism of people of "Quality" or men of the clergy. In each case he is unable to see that a playwright may only be striking at the women, people of rank, and clergymen who are foolish or wicked. His logic leads him to conclude that the stage poets "bring Women under such Misbehavior" as to do "Violence to their Native Modesty" and misrepresent their sex, "give Title and Figure to Ill Manners," and "attack Religion under every Form, and pursue the Priesthood through all the Subdivisions of Opinion."⁸ For Collier, all members of the female sex are disparaged when any one of them speaks "Smuttily" upon the stage. Likewise, a playwright need only represent one Lord Foppington for him to see the entire class of noblemen ridiculed as fools. As for the clergy, he says that the playwrights attack not only every clergyman of every religion, but religion and, ultimately, God himself. Indeed, this generalizing of poetic intent is part of his apparent plan to win a broad following, as the next chapter will attempt to show. By grouping those he sees attacked in plays, he hopes to arouse a boycott of the stage, as well as active voices to help close down the theatres. But when he shows how these groups are abused, he does not merely focus on the ill manners or immodesty with which they are represented. Knowing the value his readers place upon religion, he tries to show how the poets go beyond indecency to immorality and profanity in their presentation of characters. Thus, he argues they bring evil on the stage for imitation in order to abuse those beliefs which Christians hold sacred or holy.

Of the poets Collier attacks directly, Congreve and Vanbrugh make similar defenses of their "immodest" women. Vanbrugh begins by

agreeing with Collier about the value (though not the inherence) of modesty in a woman: "For my part I am wholly of his mind; I think 'tis almost as valuable in a Woman as in a Clergyman; and had I the ruling of the Roast, the one shou'd neither have a Husband, nor the t'other a Benefice without it."⁹ But the "Relapser" goes on to say that Collier fails to explain Miss Hoyden's immodesty in The Relapse or the reference in The Provok'd Wife which seems to "discountenance Modesty in Woman." He quotes the questionable passage from The Provok'd Wife--an interchange between Bellinda and Lady Brute labelling women's modesty as affectation and seemingly undesirable--in an attempt to clarify his own position and what he felt the audience's reaction would be. After pointing out that neither of these women are "over Virtuous," and therefore less modest than an ideal, he shows how even they recognize and convey to the audience in the same scenes the value of modesty:

But lest this [that Bellinda and Lady Brute are not ideals to be imitated] shou'd possibly be mistaken by some part of the Audience, less apprehensive of Right and Wrong than the rest, they are put in mind at the same Instant, That (with the Men) if they quit their Modesty, they lose their Charms: Now I thought 'twas impossible to put the Ladies in mind of any thing more likely to make 'em preserve it.¹⁰

Again, however, Vanbrugh (unlike Collier) assumes that the audience will be able to understand and judge characters for the ideas which they present.

Similarly, Congreve defends his portrayals of Belinda in The Old Bachelor and Miss Prue in Love for Love as effective in showing the audience what is and is not proper moral action. He leaves it to "the Judgment of any impartial Reader, to determine whether they [Belinda and Miss Prue] are represented so as to engage any Spectator to imitate

the Impudence of one, or the Affectation of the other; and whether they are not both ridiculed rather than recommended."¹¹ Quite obviously he feels the audience is capable of understanding his moral intentions even though Collier sees here only models for immodesty after which the women of the audience will pattern their behavior.

Of those playwrights not directly attacked in A Short View, Dennis presents an excellent discussion of women in his satiric letter, The Person of Quality's Answer to Mr. Collier's Letter, Being a Disswasive from the Play-House (1704). In this work the "Person of Quality's" daughter calls the theatre the most innocent and valuable diversion which the town affords the ladies:

True, Sir, there are Passages in some of our Plays, which I could heartily wish were out. But does he think the Virtue of the Ladies, who frequent Play-Houses, is so very weak, as to be o'erthrown by the Lusciousness, as he calls it, of a Scribler's Double Entendres? What, have so many great Examples as we find on the Stage, so many noble and generous Sentiments, so accomplish'd Patterns of Virtue; have all these no manner of Power to rouze, to strengthen and inflame our Virtue? . . .

If any of my Sex happen to find themselves so inform, as this worthy Reformer appears to own that he is . . . let them, in God's Name, keep away from our Theatres. But I find no such scandalous Weakness about me. I can despise a Fool who thinks to entertain me with his sordid playing on Words; but at the same time can be entertain'd with Wit and good Sense, and more with the Innocence of true writ Humour; and I can be both pleas'd and mov'd with the excellent Scenes of an Instructive Tragedy: Does this judicious Person really believe, that the Conversations which we find in the World are Virtue and Purity all? The Food of the Mind, like that of the Body, is not all of it fit for Nourishment. But strong Virtue, like strong Nature, knows how to discern and separate, to reject the Bad, to assimilate the Good, by which it is fed and supported. If any of my sex have the scandalous Weakness to have their Virtue and their Honour endanger'd by the Folly of Double Entendres, I would advise them to

take their leaves of the Play-House. But at the same time I would advise Mr. Collier to persuade his noble Patrons of the Reforming Club to erect a Protestant Nunnery for them, for nothing less can secure them. For they who are found so strangely weak as to be warm'd by a meer painted Fire, how can they ever stand against the real Flames of Love?¹²

Here, Dennis clearly defends the women who attend plays by questioning Collier's limited view of how people learn. His defense not only rejects Collier's attitude toward women in the audience but suggests how everyone in the audience can be moved and instructed rather than corrupted by a play.

Responses from those writers who were not primarily playwrights also attacked Collier's attitudes toward women. The anonymous author of The Stage Acquitted (1699) defends the speech and actions of women on the stage: "The Manners of our Stage follows the Manners of our Country, and 'tis no more Immodest in making Women talk of Love there, than they are really guilty of Immodesty in those discourses in Conversation."¹³ Like Vanbrugh's, this defense is meant to emphasize the playwrights' use of the stage as a mirror; by seeing the women on stage as examples of women in England, this critic is able to go on and explain how the stage becomes instructive through its use of characters: "Folly and Falsehood" are presented to the audience,

not in bare terms, which want a comment, but in so plain and visible a dress, that you know them off the Stage when you meet them every day in your Conversation, or in your Negotiations, in your own inclinations or practice; so that after the Spectator or Hearer has been shown the lively draught of Folly and Falsehood on the Stage, he must know it wherever he meets it, and avoid it both in himself and others, if he be capable of Correction.¹⁴

Vicious or foolish women on stage are not there for imitation or to

degrade the female sex. Such characters are there to entertain and instruct by revelation of all too human weakness and folly.

James Drake also discounts Collier's attack on the playwrights for allowing their women to act and speak immodestly on stage. Collier used Rapin's observation that modesty is the character of women in order to emphasize what monstrous creatures the playwrights had created. Drake shows how Collier's reasoning distorts the effect of immodest women on stage by using a statement from Aristotle similar to Rapin's:

Aristotle had given Courage or Valour as the Characteristick or Mark of distinction proper to the other Sex [men], which was a notion so Antient, and so universally receiv'd, that most Nations have given it a denomination from the Sex, as if peculiar to it. . . . Yet 'tis no Solecism in Poetical Manners to represent Men sometimes upon the Stage as Cowards; nor did any man ever think the whole Sex affronted by it; how near soever it might touch some Individuals.

If the Poets set up these Women of Liberty for the Representatives of their whole Sex, or pretended to make them Standards to measure all the rest by, the Sex wou'd have just reason to complain of so abusive a Misrepresentation. But 'tis just the contrary, the Sex has no Interest in the Virtues or Vices of any Individual, either on the Stage, or off of it; they reflect no honour or disgrace on the Collective Body, any more than the Neatness and good Breeding of the Court affect the Nastiness and ill Manners of Billingsgate, or are affected by 'em.¹⁵

As Drake argues, the immodest women on stage do not represent all women and are not to be imitated; rather, they are to be judged as inferior to those standards of decorum and morality which they set off by contrast. But only when the wicked and foolish women are shown in all their variety can the audience be furnished with an accurate moral basis for their judgment both in and out of the theatre.

More generally concerned with people of rank than with women, Collier thought that the playwrights should "lash the Vice without pointing upon the Quality," because representing them as flawed showed a lack of proper social respect and was dangerous, for the audience would then imitate the flaws.¹⁶ Among those who took issue with Collier's comments on the language used by characters, Vanbrugh indicates that Collier's attack on swearing in his plays is founded upon a philosophy quite different from his own. Vanbrugh is less concerned with "whether such Words are entirely justifiable or not," because he is sure "That People of the Nicest Rank both in their Religion and their Manners throughout Christendom use 'em."¹⁷ Obviously, the "Nicest Rank" does not protect individuals from the faults of all men. Those who thought rank could remove or mask sin needed to be reminded that their fellow Christians scrutinized speech and actions as well as appearance before passing judgment. Because the audience was largely made up of men and women of high social position (or those wealthy enough to think they were), the instructive value here seems clear: the people of "quality" must not only possess social rank to be favorably regarded; they must also exhibit those qualities which befit their rank.¹⁸ However, as Congreve suggests, Collier wishes to protect "Persons of Quality" by allowing neither "their Follies nor their Vices to be expos'd" on stage.¹⁹ Collier's opinion was that if people of rank appeared foolish or wicked, the audience, taking them as examples of how to live, would then imitate the sinful traits in their own lives. Congreve, however, felt that the audience could recognize vice and judge those characters who exhibited it. The actions of the play would

further expose the vice and lower the audience's opinion of the vicious characters, no matter what their rank. As he replies to Collier, "When Vice shall be allowed as an Indication of Quality and good Breeding, then it may also pass for a piece of good Breeding to complement Vice in Quality: But till then, I humbly conceive, that to expose and ridicule it, will altogether do as well."²⁰ For Congreve, "Quality" could not hide vice, but through exposure on the stage, vice might be turned to virtue.

Speaking for the playwrights, John Dennis elaborates upon the motives for bringing the nobility upon the stage for criticism:

If a Lord is capable of committing Extravagancies as well as another Man, why should Mr. Collier endeavour to persuade him that he is above it? Or why should he hinder him from being reclaim'd? Unless he would imply, that a Commoner may be corrected when he grows extravagant, but that when a Lord grows fantastick, he is altogether incorrigible. Nor are we oblig'd to Mr. Collier any more than the Peers are. For since the bare Advantage of their Condition makes some of them already grow almost insupportable, why should any one endeavour to add to their Vanity, by exempting them from common Censure?

Besides, since Follies ought to be exposed, the Follies of the Great are the fittest, as being the most conspicuous and most contagious. . . .

For our Comick Poets, I dare engage that no Men respect our Nobility more than they do: They know very well that their Titles illustrate their Merit, and adorn their Virtue; but that those whom they expose, are such whose Follies and whose Vices render their Titles ridiculous: And yet that they expose them no more than the rest of the King's Subjects. For Folly, as well as Vice, is personal, and the Satyr of Comedy falls not upon the Order of Men out of which the ridiculous Characters are taken, but upon the Persons of all Orders who are affected with the like Follies.²¹

Elkanah Settle argues similarly in his Defence of Dramatick Poetry (1698):

For as the greatest and best part of our Audience are Quality, if we would make our Comedies Instructive in the exposing of Vice, we must not lash the Vices at Wapping to mend the Faults at Westminster.

And as the Instructive Design of the Play must look as well to the Cautioning of Virtue from the ensnaring Conversation of Vice, as [to] the lashing of Vice it self. Thus the Court Libertine must be a Person of Wit and Honour, and have all the accomplishments of a Fine Gentleman.²²

As many of Collier's opponents suggest, it seems odd that a priest would defend the privilege of rank, for as a Christian leader, he should assume all men capable of sinful actions and speech.

Remarks from critics and anonymous writers generally agree that Collier misreads the effect a vicious or foolish character of rank will have on an audience. The author of A Letter to A. H. Esq. (1698), for example, tries to show that the audience is not swept by a feeling that "every foolish Peer who is brought on the Stage" must be seen as "a Reflection of all the Men of Condition":

'Tis absurd to make no distinction; as if a particular Vice in a particular Man, cou'd not be expos'd without a design'd Reflection on all who belong to him. It ought to touch no body but whom it concerns; and it has its end, if it reclaims where it was design'd, and prevents others, by shewing the Danger: And this is the Design of Comedy.²³

Thus, far from serving as model representations of a class, the Lord Foppingtons and Lady Wishforts were seen as disgusting, and therefore instructive, characters by Collier's opponents. Their mistakes on stage could forewarn those susceptible to similar faults while showing others what they already looked like to the judging eyes of the world.

James Drake concludes his comments to Collier by examining the clergyman's accusation of rude treatment of the nobility. Drake's logic

seems so sharp it is difficult to imagine how Collier might have answered him effectively. He begins by saying that "if Birth or any other Chance shou'd make a Lord of a Fool" the other nobles should not feel guilty or abused unless the poets "presume to make such a one the Representative of his Order, and propose him as a common Standard."

Drake also suggests that it would be wrong and dangerous to "characterize too nearly and particularly any of those Noble Persons."

But while the Poet contents himself with feign'd Persons, and copies closely after Nature, without pressing upon her in her private recesses, and singling out Individuals from the herd, if any Man, of what Quality or Employment soever, fancies himself concern'd in the representation, let him spoil the Picture by mending the Original. For he only is to be blam'd for the Resemblance. If Men of Honour and Abilities cou'd entail their Wisdom and Virtues upon their Posterity, then a Title wou'd be a pretty sure sign of Personal Worth, and the Respect and Reverence that was paid to the Founders of honourable Families ought to follow the Estate, and the heir of one shou'd be heir of t'other.²⁴

Collier was incensed that a member of the clergy even appears on the stage, especially as a satirical butt. He devotes an entire chapter of A Short View to an examination of the abuses of the clergy on the stage, throughout suggesting that the intention and effect of showing evil or foolish men of the cloth is to undermine religion. He feels that "the Holy Function [of the clergy] is much too Solemn to be play'd with. Christianity is for no Fooling, neither Place, the Occasion nor the Actors are fit for such a Representation. To bring the Church into the Play-House, is the way to bring the Play-House into the Church. 'Tis apt to turn Religion into Romance; and make unthinking People conclude, that all Serious Matters are nothing but Farce, Fiction

and Design." As he sees it, the playwrights' "Aim is to destroy Religion, their preaching is against Sermons."²⁵ In response Vanbrugh recognizes the "Holy Function" by granting that the "Institution of the Clergy" is "Both in the Intention and Capacity the most effectual" in promoting "the Practice of all Moral Virtues." But he says that his purpose in representing the clergy through a disguised Sir John Brute (The Provok'd Wife, IV, i), was "to put the Audience in mind, that there were Laymen so wicked, they car'd not what they did to bring Religion in Contempt, and were therefore always ready to throw dirt upon the Pilots of it."²⁶ Obviously, Vanbrugh expects the audience to indict the drunken Brute (and those clergymen who would similarly misuse their positions) rather than religion, the clergy, or himself as playwright. Likewise, Congreve has only respect for the office of the clergy and deprecates anyone who would ridicule the priesthood: "If any Man has in any Play expos'd a Priest, as a Priest, and with an intimation, that as such, his Character is ridiculous: I will agree heartily to condemn both the Play and the Author. I am confident no Man can defend such an Impiety; and whoever is guilty of it, my Advice to him is, that he acknowledge his Error, that he repent of it and sin no more."²⁷ But Congreve clarifies the dramatic intention of representing clergymen on the stage by pointing out what Collier should have been keenly aware of--the human flaws of any man, layman or priest:

I would ask Mr. Collier whether a Man, after he receiv'd holy Orders, is become incapable of either playing the Knave, or the Fool?

If he is not incapable, it is possible that some time or other his Capacity may exert it self to Action.

If he is found to play the Knave, he is subject to the Penalties of the Law, equally with a Lay-man; if he plays the Fool, he is equally with a Lay-fool, the subject of Laughter and Contempt.

By this Behaviour the Man becomes alienated from the Priest; as such Actions are in their own nature separate and very far remov'd from his function, and when such a one is brought on the Stage, the folly is exposed, not the function; the Man is ridicul'd, and not the Priest.

Such a Character neither does nor can asperse the sacred Order of Priesthood, neither does it at all reflect upon the persons of the pious and good Clergy: For as Ben. Johnson observes on the same occasion from St. Hierome,

Ubi generalis est de vitiis disputatio,

Ibi nullius esse personae injuriam,

where the business is to expose and reprehend Folly and Vice in general, no particular person ought to take offence. And such business is properly the business of Comedy.²⁸

Congreve asserts not only a Christian humanist's view of man, who may be foolish or vicious no matter what his office, but also a moral purpose for exposing flawed clergymen on stage. He even uses the twenty-sixth "Article of Religion" to show that the church's own laws make provisions to locate, try, and depose "evil Ministers."²⁹

Collier's arguments about the clergy reveal both inconsistencies in logic and some rather unusual views of man for an apparently devout Christian. He spends ten pages in A Short View trying to show how priests are different from other men by pointing out "their Relation to the Deity," "the Importance of their Office," and the "prescription for their Privilege."³⁰ Thus, while he admits that "the Clergy mismanage sometimes," he denies that a mere layman, least of all a playwright, can censure them. But he goes too far in his defense of the clergy and contradicts the main distinction he has tried to establish. He says that

though "the Clergy may have their Failings sometimes like others. . . . the Character is still untarnish'd. The Men may be Little but the Priests are not so. And therefore like other People, they ought to be treated by their best Distinction."³¹ He may feel this is a fine way to remove the guilty clergymen from attack, but he has just argued at length that the priests are not "like other People." First he seems to be saying that the priests are better than men not of the cloth; thus, they should not be censured. Then, however, since evidence contradicts this "fact" in some cases, he considers the priests equal to other men--though they still must not be censured and only their positive attributes are to be represented. The implication is that all men are thus to be judged only on their "best Distinction," an attitude Collier certainly forgets when evaluating the playwrights.

A slightly different contradiction appears when Collier attempts to defend the clergy's privilege in his Defence of the Short View. In his reply to Congreve he explains that

If you make the Man a Knave, the Priest must suffer under the Imputation: And a Fool in his Person, will never be thought discreet in his Function. Upon this account Persons in Authority, whether Spiritual or Civil, ought to be privileg'd from Abuse. To make the Ministers of Church or State, the subject of Laughter and Contempt, disables their Authority, and renders their Commission insignificant.³²

But apparently Collier was confused about clergy privilege, for he later defends the acquisition of "Riches and Power" by the clergy because they are so much like most men:

Are not the Clergy of the same Humane Nature with other People? Have they not the same Necessities for this World, and the same Conscience and Discretion to use it? Generally speaking, Poverty

does as ill with a Priest, as with a Poet. 'Tis
 apt to Sink the Spirits, to make the Mind grow
 Anxious, and Feeble in the discharge of Function.³³

Thus, the images of the priests which Collier conveys are contradictory: one image depends on a defense of their spiritual nature which should keep them immune from the critical barbs of other men; the other image depends on their very human material needs and desires which make them the same as other men. Vanbrugh focuses on this latter image when he shows how far Collier seems to depart from some obvious Christian examples of self-denial of worldly wealth and position:

He is of Opinion, That Riches and Plenty, Title,
 State and Dominion, give a Majesty to Precept, and cry
Place for it wherever it comes; That Christ and his
 Apostles took the thing by the wrong Handle; and that
 the Pope and his Cardinals have much refin'd upon 'em
 in the Policy of Instruction. That shou'd a Vicar,
 like St. John, feed on Locusts and Wild Honey, his
 Parish wou'd think he had too ill a taste for himself,
 to cater for them; and that a Bishop, who, like St.
 Paul, shou'd decline Temporal Dominion, wou'd shew
 himself such an Ass, his Advice wou'd go for nothing.³⁴

Congreve, too, says that his own respect and admiration for "many Reverend Clergymen now living" is not due to their rank or material status but to "their Humility, their Humanity, their exceeding Learning, which is yet exceeded by their Modesty; their exemplary Behaviour in their whole Lives and Conversations; their Charitable Censures, of Youthfull Errors and Negligences, their fatherly and tender admonitions, accompanied with all sweetness of Behaviour; and full of mild yet forcible Perswasion."³⁵

Collier's belief that the clergy was being abused on the stage found a poor reception with far more than the playwrights he attacked in A Short View. Other playwrights and critics less closely connected

with the stage also saw problems in his depiction of the rights and privileges of clergymen. Dennis, like Congreve, emphasizes "the way for a Clergyman to secure himself from Contempt, is not to boast of secular Advantages, which in him is truly ridiculous, but to shew his Meekness and his Humility, which are true Christian Virtues."³⁶ The position to which Collier has elevated the clergy is depreciated by James Drake, who emphasizes that they are still men and certainly do not have as close a "Relation to the Deity" as A Short View indicates.

I suppose, if Mr. Collier's Band hung awry, or his Face was dirty, he would use the assistance of a Glass to make all right and clean. Why then does he reject the use of that which might do the same office for his mind, and help him to correct the follies and management of his Life? The case is plain, he is blind to his own Faults, and mad that any one else should see 'em. This makes him call the shewing any of their failings, exposing the Clergy, as if thereby only they become publick, not considering that the Glass shews our Faults to our selves only; other people can see 'em plainly and as readily without its help. But Mr. Collier, who takes every thing by the wrong handle, looks upon a correction as a reproach, and had rather a Fault should pass unmended, than be taken notice of.³⁷

Again and again Collier shows that his understanding of drama is limited to outrage at what seems to him a portrayal of evil. Though Collier's hazy critical perception of dramatic purpose may be largely behind this view of the clergy on the stage, Drake suggests that Collier's own sense of superiority has allowed him to become "the first bold Mortal, that ever pretended to represent the person of God Almighty seriously. This to me sounds more like Blasphemy, than any thing in the most profane Poet."³⁸

Drake may not have been exactly correct in evaluating Collier's self-concept, but as a critic trying to explain how drama was designed

to affect men, his observations were not isolated. The anonymous author of A Letter to A. H. Esq; Concerning the Stage (1698) points out that "'Tis certain, since the Stage has used the Gown freely, and the Laity have not been afraid to look into their Faults, that they are more humble, and less publickly vicious."³⁹ This defender sees not only potential for the stage but elaborates on its successes:

Besides their Reforming of Manners, the Stage has taught them [clergymen] to speak English, and preach more like Ambassadors of their great Master. It has taught them to argue rationally, and at once mended their Stile, and Form of their Sermons In short, the Drunkenness, Whoring, Insolence, and Dulness that has appear'd under a Black Coat on the Stage, have made the Men of the same Colour of it keep within Bounds: And that a Man might not teize them with the Representation, they have endeavour'd to appear in as differing a Form as possible.⁴⁰

Collier's vanity insulated him from the education which this critic felt the stage provided. To correct and guard against mistakes, however, a man must be humble enough to accept the possibility of his faults and discerning enough to see them when they are presented on stage. Collier, and those who vigorously supported him, often seem neither humble nor discerning.

In Some Remarks upon Mr. Collier's Defence of His Short View of the English Stage (1698), a vindicator of Congreve and Vanbrugh takes the position that good clergymen, like good kings, need not fear and have not feared the portrayal of an evil priest or prince on stage: "Why may not a good Priest see an ill one Characterised, and not be concern'd, since even Mr. Collier and ten thousand Instances allow, that failings are incident to them as well as to the rest of human Kind?" He goes on to note how "abominable Stories of the Monks and Friars" are found in

novels of Spain and Italy, nations which are most under "subjection to their Ghostly Fathers":

Yet even with them the Bad are exposed; all our reformatations and Amendments came from discovery of their Faults; nor can I think a Chaplain Ridiculed in such a Family as Sir Tunbelly's, Reflects any more upon a sensible and learned Man in that Capacity, than Justice Clodpate in Epsom-Wells, does upon several Worthy Men that fill the Benches.⁴¹

Through his critical spokesman, Savage, John Oldmixon justifies the playwrights' use of clergymen on stage. His reasoning corresponds to almost all of those who defended the practice:

A Poet can't set a man in the Stocks for being drunk, not break an Officer for being a Coward, nor fine a man for Extortion, neither can he pull the Gown over a disorderly Parsons ears; but, if he can, he may make 'em all asham'd of their faults, by shewing their Characters ridiculous. Let a Clergy-man be a Fop or a Rake, a Pedant or a Coxcomb, he is accountable in the Poets Court for his Lewdness and Folly. Their punishment is to expose him, and in many cases the Law can do no more, sometimes not so much.⁴²

He feels men are taught by seeing others make mistakes which they might make or have already made. Savage comments later on Collier's "sophistry" in attacking the playwrights on this point: "We have seen how far the Clergy may be laught at, without concerning their office or order in their Quarrel . . . and that the Poets never intended to affront the Clergy in general, by their treating those who deserv'd it as scandalously as they liv'd."⁴³ Through the fear of ridicule or the shame of recognition, the clergymen could modify their behavior and thoughts. In this way a playwright becomes in part a legislator working through his art for the improvement of those who witness his creations.

Collier seems to have two major problems with the presentation

of characters and themes (mainly the evil nature of man) on stage. His first problem is an inability to see the play as an artistic work, distanced from the artist and the audience yet emblematic and allusive. Thus, the thoughts and language of the characters become the thoughts and language of the playwrights for him. He lifts passages from context, examines, and condemns them as profane, with no sense that he has disturbed an artistic whole and thus distorted meaning by his amputations. Closely related to this fault is his Platonic prejudice against the presentation of evil on stage. This prejudice manifests itself in his total disgust with elements of human nature which the playwrights would have him witness and thus controls his ideas about how man can best be taught to modify his thoughts and behavior.

In A Defence of the Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage (1699), he clearly exposes his first problem. Here, he sees characterization as an excuse, a "pretence" to justify "profane Sallies." He asserts that "'tis the Poet that speaks in the Persons of the Stage; And that he who makes a Man Mad, must answer for his Distraction."⁴⁴ This total lack of understanding of the creative process runs counter to Congreve's view that the playwright creates individuals who embody traits and ideas he sees in life around him, not representatives of and spokesmen for himself. After asserting that comedy must expose vice and folly by portraying "vicious and foolish Characters," Congreve desires "that it may not be imputed to the Perswasion or private Sentiments of the Author, if at any time one of these vicious Characters in any of his Plays shall behave himself foolishly, or immorally in Word or Deed. I hope I am not yet unreasonable; it were

very hard that a Painter should be believ'd to resemble, all the ugly Faces that he draws."⁴⁵ In addition, he remarks that "any Expression or Passage cited from any Play" by Collier cannot be judged "out of its proper Scene, or alienated from the Character by which it is spoken; for in that place alone, and in his Mouth alone, can it have its proper and true Signification."⁴⁶ There is a conscious distance between the writer and the characters he draws, and the artist is in part distinguished by how well his characters fit the situations or scenes of the play.

Dryden, as if anticipating Collier's attacks on him, speaks of what the poet may appropriately treat in a play so that it may "as well be conducing to holiness as to good manners." He notes that he has been "charged by some ignorant and malicious persons with no less crimes than profaneness and irreligion" in his play Tyrannic Love, or the Royal Martyr (1670), and he thus answers the charges, made mainly against Maximin, the heathen tyrant in the play:

If it be urged that a person of such principles who scoffs at any religion ought not to be presented on the stage; why then are the lives and sayings of so many wicked and profane persons recorded in the Holy Scriptures? I know it will be answered that a due use may be made of them; that they are remembered with a brand of infamy fixed upon them; and set as sea-marks for those who behold them to avoid. And what other use have I made of Maximin? Have I proposed him as a pattern to be imitated, whom even for his impiety to his false gods I have so severely punished.⁴⁷

Dryden quite clearly expects the audience to understand and learn from the justice meted out to such an evil character.

In his preface to his translation of De Arte Graphica: the

Art of Painting (1695), he also shows how different from Collier's is his view of man and of stage characters. He points out that the

idea of perfection is of little use in portraits . . . [and] in the characters of comedy and tragedy, which are never to be made perfect, but always be drawn with some specks of frailty and deficiency The perfection of such stage-characters consists chiefly in their likeness to the deficient faulty nature, which is their original.⁴⁸

It is in large part the depiction of man's nature, in all its deformity, which makes the drama both instructive and pleasing.⁴⁹

Other playwrights with some sense of the artistic importance of presenting a variety of characters also got into the battle. Though Elkanah Settle was not directly attacked, he chose to defend writers like Vanbrugh and Dryden by pointing out Collier's imperfect understanding of their works. In defending Vanbrugh's choice of main characters in The Relapse, for example, he suggests that Collier

not expect that All the Characters in the Comedy should be Virtuous: A Composition of that kind cannot well be made; nor would such a Composition truly reach the whole Instructive Ends of the Drama. Contraria juxta se posita magis elucescunt, is a very great Maxim, The Foyl sets off the Diamond. And that Foyl, I may venture to say, is wanted in the Comedy, to make the Virtue shine the brighter.⁵⁰

Settle is very conscious of the impact a virtuous character can have on an audience, but only if the character is presented realistically in a world with vices to challenge that virtue. The audience interest will focus on the struggle a character like Amanda (The Relapse) has to maintain her chastity. The effect of the struggle--Amanda's success and Worthy's conversion--may then serve as an instructive conclusion to the action. Because temptation is recognizable, even to the most virtuous members of the audience, the temptation must appear realistic; to do so

requires the presence of vice, not as an abstract concept, but in the persons of "the gay World."

John Oldmixon, through his critical mouthpiece, Savage, in Reflections on the Stage (1699), affirms the idea of poetic justice in his defense of vice on the stage:

If Comedy is to correct Vice, it must expose it, and how can vitious man be expos'd but by his words or actions: now to make him act his wickedness, would be to restore the Infamy of the Pantomimes, and the Poets have no other way of discovering him, but to make him talk loosely, suitable to his Character. A man must not be punish'd on the Stage for nothing. A lewd Fellow must act his part as far as decency will permit, that he may suffer for 't in the end, and as long as he keeps to nature with this restriction, the Poet can't err.⁵¹

Language here becomes a way of creating a character who "keeps to nature" and thus is recognizable to the audience. Like Congreve, Oldmixon further emphasizes the context of language in the play by asking Collier:

Are there not some passages which depend entirely on what went before 'em, and on the Character of the persons who spoke 'em? How can a man judge of the thing but by the Character? and all that ever writ have made the persons they introduce, speak according to their Characters. Has not Milton in the best and most Religious Poem that has been writ since our Saviours days, made his Devil say of God Almighty?

Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heaven. And who, that should light on this Verse, would not think the Author guilty of horrid Blasphemy, unless he read what went before, and consider'd who spoke it.⁵²

A similar attitude emerges in Father Francois Caffero's letter, which Peter Motteux prefixed to his Beauty in Distress (1698). Taking a Thomistic position throughout, the Father feels that we cannot condemn "those Actions and Words which may by accident raise the Passions, . . . for we cannot walk a Step, read a Book, enter a Church, or live in the World,

without meeting with a thousand things capable of exciting the Passions." Living in the world necessitates a confrontation with evil, but imitation of evil is no necessary consequence. Likewise, he feels plays are not intended to corrupt the audience:

for tho they speak of Love, Hatred, Ambition, Revenge, and the like, 'tis not done with an Intention of exciting those kinds of Passions in the Audience; nor are there any such scandalous Circumstances in them, as will infallibly produce such mischievous Effects in their Minds.⁵³

Additional critics in favor of the presentation of vice on stage used 1) arguments supporting the ability of the audience to distinguish and judge properly (rather than imitate blindly) based upon the accuracy of the playwrights' depiction of the society and 2) arguments founded primarily upon the artistic necessity of making the play a whole, with the actions and language of each character logical and meaningful to the unfolding plot and the ultimate moral intentions of the playwright.⁵⁴ James Drake, echoing Congreve and discussing Collier's misunderstanding of Aristophanes, explains how the poet is not to be identified with his characters:

The people of Athens, who were in these matters much more delicate, than Mr. Collier seems to be, had the niceness to distinguish justly between the Private Sentiments of the Man, and the Publick one's of the Poet. In this latter capacity almost all sorts of Characters belong'd to him, and he must of consequence be frequently necessitated to make use of Thoughts and Expressions very contrary to his own proper opinion. The Athenians therefore did not lay these Liberties of the Stage, which they knew the nature of those Characters which he represented must of course oblige him to, as blemishes either in his Faith or Morals, to his Charge. Had Mr. Collier been Master of as much Understanding and Justice, as these Heathens, not only Aristophanes, but our English Poets too had met with a fairer Adversary, and found civiller and honester treatment.⁵⁵

He later criticizes Collier's reasoning because "Mr. Collier knows, that the business of Comedy is to instruct by example; and he mistakenly imagines, that these ought to be Examples for Imitation." Drake, however, feels that Comedy presents only examples for caution, not imitation. He points out Collier's fear that since the poets mix "Beauties" and "Blemishes" within a work or a character, "Folks" will be tempted to "ape the Deformities" as well as the admirable qualities. But Drake feels that "the Understanding of our Youth is not so very depress'd and low; but they can very readily distinguish between the obvious Beauties, and Defects of a Character, and are not to be fool'd like Dottrels into a vicious Imitation."⁵⁶ Even Edward Filmer, who agreed to the need for reformation of many contemporary plays, carefully explained the necessity for representing evil and foolish characters acting and speaking appropriately. Presented with an accurate depiction of these characters, the audience, then, would not be "judging without Process, and condemning without Proof; which is certainly the greatest Injustice imaginable."⁵⁷ Indeed, justice, rendered by the audience upon the characters or by the playwrights through "Stage-Discipline" (poetic justice), was the key to sound artistic creation. For Filmer, the best plays were those which involved the audience, through the characters, in a process of evaluation; the audience could then understand the moral which was not only part of the art, but the basis for the art.

Against these justifications for the presentation of evil on stage, Collier could only repeat his fearful, Platonic cry. In it there was a warning of imminent doom, which found ready ears among those who knew or cared little about the drama.

NOTES

¹A Second Defence of the Short View of the Prophaneness and Immorality of the English Stage (London, 1700), p. 36.

²Ridpath's The Stage Condemn'd first appeared late in 1698. Bedford barraged the public with Serious Reflections on the Scandalous Abuse and Effects of the Stage (London, 1705); A Second Advertisement Concerning the Profaneness of the Playhouse (London, 1705); The Evil and Danger of Stage Plays (London, 1706); A Serious Remonstrance in Behalf of the Christian Religion (London, 1719); The Great Abuse of Musick (London, 1711); and A Sermon Preached in the Parish-Church of St. Butolph's Aldgate (London, 1730). Law's The Absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage-Entertainment Fully Demonstrated first appeared in 1726, the year of Collier's death, and was reprinted throughout the century.

³Johnson, in The Lives of the English Poets, and Macaulay, in both "Comic Dramatists of the Restoration" and The History of England, show respect for Collier and many of his views.

⁴John Palmer, The Comedy of Manners (1913; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), pp. 276-277; E. E. Stoll, "Literature No 'Document,'" MLR, XIX (1924), 150; Maxmillian E. Novak, "The Artist and the Clergyman: Congreve, Collier, and the World of the Play," College English, XXX (1969), 556.

⁵A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (London, 1698), p. 2.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 4 & 11.

⁷A Defence of Plays, (London, 1707), p. 16.

⁸A Short View, pp. 9, 17 & 110.

⁹The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, eds., Bonamy Dobrée and Geoffrey Webb (Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1927), I, 196.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 197.

¹¹The Complete Works of William Congreve, ed., Montague Summers (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1923), III, 175.

¹²The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), 317-318.

¹³p. 72.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁵The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd (London, 1699), pp. 287-288.

¹⁶A Short View, p. 175.

¹⁷Works, I, 197-198.

¹⁸That Vanbrugh's comment here has been seen mainly as a defense of realism, rather than as a moral judgment based upon realistic observation, may indicate the effect Collier has had on more recent critics who have dealt with the controversy.

¹⁹Works, III, 177.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Critical Works, I, 182.

²²pp. 89-90.

²³pp. 7-8.

²⁴Stages, pp. 365-366. Drake had earlier made the point that persons of quality, especially gentlemen, should not be represented in comedy as being "of sound Sense and perfect Morals," for this would be unnatural. In fact, "Fools of what Quality soever are proper Goods and Chattels of the Stage" as well as a "Gentleman of Wit and Honour" as long as his "Appetites are strong and irregular enough, to hurry him beyond his discretion, and make him act against the Conviction of his Judgment" (pp. 234-236).

²⁵A Short View, pp. 123-124.

²⁶Works, I, 202-203.

²⁷Works, III, 191.

²⁸Ibid., 189-190.

²⁹Ibid., 190-191. In part this article, as Congreve quotes it, reads: "'it appertaineth to the Discipline of the Church, that enquiry be made of evil Ministers: And that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their Offences; and finally being found Guilty by just Judgment be deposed.'"

³⁰p. 127.

³¹Ibid., p. 139.

³²A Defence of the Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage (London, 1699), p. 70.

³³Ibid., p. 117.

³⁴Works, I, 202-203.

³⁵Works, III, 193.

³⁶Critical Works, I, 187.

³⁷Stages, pp. 344-345.

³⁸Ibid., p. 346.

³⁹p. 6.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 7.

⁴¹p. 12.

⁴²Reflections on the Stage, and Mr. Collyer's Defence of the Short View (London, 1699), pp. 65-66.

⁴³Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁴p. 108.

⁴⁵Works, III, 173.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷"Of Dramatic Poesy" and Other Critical Essays, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1922), I, 139-140. He also suggests his method of teaching the audience: "I only maintain, against the enemies of the stage, that patterns of piety, decently represented and equally removed from the extremes of superstition and profaneness, may be of excellent use to second the precepts of our religion. By the harmony of words we elevate the mind to a sense of devotion, as our solemn music, which is inarticulate poesy, does in churches; and by the lively images of piety, adorned by action, through the senses allure the soul; which while it is charmed in a silent joy of what it sees and hears, is struck at the same time with a secret veneration of things celestial, and is wound up insensibly into the practice of that which it admires"(139).

⁴⁸Ibid., II, 184.

⁴⁹He says in the same preface that in comedy, the worst likenesses of men should be presented in order to produce laughter and to instruct the vulgar, "who are never well amended till they are more than sufficiently exposed" (II, 185).

⁵⁰A Farther Defence of Dramatick Poetry (London, 1698), pp. 64-65.

⁵¹p. 54. Oldmixon also stresses that a poet must show the audience why a character deserves punishment (pp. 116-117).

⁵²Ibid., pp. 11-12.

⁵³p. xxiv.

⁵⁴Some Remarks Upon Mr. Collier's Defence of his Short View of the English Stage (London, 1698), p. 9 and A Letter to A. H. Esq.; Concerning the Stage (London, 1698), pp. 7 & 9.

⁵⁵Stages, pp. 327-328.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 270-272.

⁵⁷Filmer, pp. 36 & 71.

CHAPTER III
PERSUASION OF THE UNKNOWING: THE SUCCESS OF COLLIER'S VIEW

It might be asked how two twentieth-century critics could look back at the Collier controversy and draw opposing conclusions about Collier's impact on the drama. How is it possible that G. F. Lamb finds Collier and his followers little more than "temporary nuisances" to the stage, while E. E. Stoll suggests that "all Jeremy Collier . . . had to do was appeal to the old faith--their faith still--and Congreve and Vanbrugh were routed, and the stage purged"?¹ To arrive at some reason for this disagreement, and thus an evaluation of the success or failure of Collier's arguments, the changes in the drama as well as the popularity of Collier's works should be considered. Also, it should be stressed that whatever popularity Collier's views have achieved among some, his fallacious methods of argument and his conclusions were repeatedly and accurately exploded by the contemporary critical replies. And because much of his popularity depended upon his image as an expert on moral reform, these replies questioned his sincerity as a reformer and his authority as a judge of morality in the drama.

Two questions arise when trying to understand Collier's impact on the stage. Why, for nearly forty years after the restoration of Charles II and the theatre, is there no significant censure of the drama? And how can a work like A Short View suddenly appear and go through five editions while spawning other equally hostile attacks by opponents of the stage? Certainly an answer to both of these questions would have to be that the timing of the publication took advantage of

social changes occurring in England, especially in London. Some of the changes would have been obvious in the theatre audiences, who probably bought Collier's treatise and followed the controversy with interest. Emmett L. Avery and Arthur H. Scouten point out that during the forty years from 1660-1700 "essentially, it appears that both the audience and its taste altered In 1660 the spectators were principally moderately cultured, well-educated persons. . . ."2 As the century progressed, and especially after Charles' reign, "the middle classes, citizens, gentlemen, and ladies, the apprentices, and even servants formed a larger portion of the audience."3 John Loftis is even more specific in identifying the merchants as the most influential group in changing the taste of the audience.⁴ These merchants were becoming increasingly wealthy and greater in number--especially in and around London--as the century drew to a close. As a group of newly rich, who had made their money from trade and industry, they could afford the high-priced admission to the theatres and occupied the seats earlier reserved only for landed gentry and members of the court circle. But this group had no way of instantly attaining the knowledge of literary and dramatic traditions which the people of fashion were expected to possess. Economically, they had gained status, but their lack of taste and judgment forced many of the better playwrights to "lose" this part of their audience. John Dennis is extremely conscious of this new element in the audience in A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry, and the Causes of the Degeneracy of It (1702). He does not merely point out that "these People, who in their original obscurity, could never attain to any higher entertainment than Tumbling and Vaulting and Ladder

Dancing, and the delightful diversions of Jack Pudding . . . [are still] in Love with their old sports, and encourage these noble Pastimes still upon the Stage."⁵ He also devotes much of his letter to a comparison between contemporary audiences and those immediately following the Restoration. He finds that "the taste of England for Comedy . . . was certainly much better in the Reign of King Charles the Second, than it is at present. For it was then extremely good, and is now excessively bad." In drawing this conclusion, he presents two important "Maxims":

First, That then there is among any People a good taste for Comedy, when a very considerable part of an Audience are qualified to judge for themselves, and when they who are not qualified to judge for themselves, are influenced by the authority of those who are rightly qualified. Secondly, that then there is among any People a bad taste for Comedy, when very few of an Audience are qualify'd to judge for themselves, and when the rest are influenced by the authority of those who are not rightly qualified.

He then goes on to state that, under Charles, the first maxim held, while presently the second is true. His proof involves an explanation of those qualifications necessary to judge good poetry, qualifications which the good poet and critic must share, for "no man can judge of a Beautiful imagination in another without some degree of it in himself":

And as for the judging rightly of any thing without Judgment, that is a contradiction in terms. And if philosophy and a knowledge of the World are necessary to a Comick Poet, for his forming his Characters; if an acquaintance with the best Authors among the Antients and Moderns, be requisite for the attaining the Vivacity and Grace of the Dialogue; why, then for the forming a true judgment of these, the same Learning and the same Experience are necessary. And lastly, if a Poet had need to have his mind free, that he may the more thoroughly enter into the concerns of the Theatre, and put on the Passions and Humours of his different Characters, so as to make them by turns his own; why the Spectator, that he may judge whether the Author does

this or no, must enter into those Passions and Humours in some proportionable degree, and consequently ought to have his mind free from all avocations of Business, and from all real vexatious Passions.

Thus, to be able to pass accurate judgment upon a play, one had to possess all of the following in some measure: "a lively, and a warm, and a strong imagination, and a solid and piercing judgment," "a knowledge of things . . . because the ultimate end of Comedy is to instruct, and to instruct all," "a knowledge of the World and of Mankind," and "Leisure" and "Serenity." The reason Dennis sees "a considerable part" of the audience of the Restoration years possessing these qualities while "in the present Reign very few in an Audience" have them is not because "Humane Nature [has] decay'd since the Reign of Charles the Second." Rather, he suggests that "the faculties of the Soul, like the parts of the Body, receive nourishment from use, and derive skill as well as they do force and vigour from exercise."⁶

If Dennis's observation--that this new class of theatre-goers had helped eclipse qualified judgment of the plays--is accurate, those in the audience who could be influenced by the thesis of A Short View would have increased by 1698. This is not to say that the merchants took over the audience, but as a developing source of wealth (and thus theatre revenue) they were making themselves recognized.⁷ And though a small percentage of all merchants (both wealthy tradesmen and poorer shopkeepers) attended the theatre,⁸ those not seeing or reading plays probably would have been even more influenced by an anti-stage treatise like Collier's. After all, what value (especially moral value) could there be in spending time, energy, and money away from business? In

fact, according to one anonymous spokesman for the mercantile position, the stage leads men, through an excitement of their imaginations, from "the Fatigue and Engagement of Business And among a trading People this is a Mischief to be dreaded and shun'd to the last Degree: Trade requiring Industry and Application, that the Mind be sent to it and engag'd in it."⁹ What many merchants imagined about plays perhaps needed only the virulent confirmation of a seemingly honest and informed man of the cloth, no matter his lack of political popularity at the time. James Drake seems to have this type of merchant in mind when he suggests that Collier uses his assured attack to influence people "whose Fears are Stronger than their Judgments."¹⁰ That Collier was conscious of this body of readers for his attacks is not assured, but his arguments and point of view were far more creditable to them than to the playwrights. Not having the proper tools to understand, judge, or appreciate the performances or published versions for themselves, these readers of A Short View would have been only too willing to accept Collier's vision of stage corruption.

But perhaps even more significant in accounting for the sudden popularity of anti-stage publications are the societies for the reformation of manners which began to form shortly after 1688. As Dudley W. R. Bahlman points out, two great waves of enthusiasm for the formation of these societies rolled across England during the 1690's.¹¹ Bahlman accounts for this spirit of reformation as, in part, a reaction to the threat of Catholicism:

The reformation of manners was but one aspect of a religious revival which had begun in the brief reign of James II. The threat of Roman Catholicism

in that time had been a challenge to both churchmen and dissenters. Popery meant tyranny, while protestantism was the bulwark of the traditional rights and liberties of Englishmen. Therefore, one way to show a stubborn defiance of James' rule was to throng the churches and chapels of England. The wave of piety that resulted from this form of resistance did not disappear with the accession of William and Mary; it persisted and manifested itself not only in the formation of societies for reformation but in the activities of other organizations as well.

The purpose of the societies for the reformation of manners was not only to preach against the immorality and profaneness which they felt had engulfed England, but to encourage new laws and bring to prosecution those breaking existing laws. The groups would march out like an army to inform against those who appeared guilty of public cursing, swearing, drunkenness, or profanation of the Lord's day. Their hope, not unlike Plato's in The Republic or Collier's in A Short View, was "to create a moral paradise" through the enforcement of laws. The version of paradise brought on by this "army of reform" caused even ministers like John Ryther to

so far forget the natural depravity of man as to tell the local reforming society to pray "that there may be in many, very many, a reformation, the effect of conversion, that we may live to see that joyful day when profaneness, irreligion, and immorality shall be banished out of the land; and godliness, religion and goodness shall be flourishing, spreading, prevailing, and in prospering condition everywhere."

These Platonic (and Pelagian) characteristics of the movement did not go totally unnoticed by its members, however, for Bahlman points out that William Bisset, in his Plain English (London, 1704), felt that the societies "were not trying to save the souls of wicked men at all," which as Christians, they should have been doing. Bisset, speaking sarcastically for the societies, interprets their aims by saying that men

"may be as secretly wicked, lewd, and worldly as they please; we won't force them (they need not fear it) to a heavenly mind, much less to Heaven against their liking. But we would oblige them (if possible) to be civil upon Earth and let their neighbors live by them a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty."¹²

The concentrated effort was made to remove the appearance of evil from daily life, just as Collier wished to remove evil characters, language, and actions from the stage. This being done, it was supposed England would be cleansed of its vice and wickedness; Bisset, obviously, saw a fallacy in this kind of attitude.

In addition to the societies' zealous concern with the appearance of evil, their composition would have made them particularly receptive to Collier's arguments. They were made up of individuals who felt that all of their members were virtuous, untainted by the sins they were fighting. Unlike the other societies--the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and the religious societies--the societies for the reformation of manners were not strictly Anglican. And as Bahlman says, "they were critics of Church and the State," since they felt neither had enforced the laws against immorality. Also, both the reform and religious societies "were composed primarily of tradesmen and some apprentices,"¹³ who like the wealthier merchants, would have known little of literary and dramatic tradition and even less of contemporary plays. Though, as dissenters and Anglicans, these reformers did not share Collier's non-juring position with respect to William, they were as zealously active in sniffing about for sources of smut. Where any basis for a critical judgment of the drama was lacking, Collier's seeming

understanding as well as his acquaintance with authorities on the stage could easily have convinced the unknowing. After all, not only the end--the abolition of immorality and profaneness--but the means--censorship and prosecution--were the same for Collier and the reform societies.

There is further evidence which Professor Scouten has found to link the popularity of Collier's works with the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (a group Bahlman says lay between the religious societies and the reform societies in its zeal as a reforming force among the people). Scouten finds evidence in the minutes of the SPCK that they purchased at least two hundred copies of Mr. Collier's Dissuasive from the Play-House (1703) to be distributed. Also recorded are large purchases of other anti-stage literature which the society passed out at coffee houses, churches, and other gathering places.¹⁴ Scouten does not claim to have surveyed all the records of SPCK, nor is it likely that all of their purchases of tracts and pamphlets were recorded, but what he has noted indicates a specific interest by the SPCK in the controversy and a considerable financial investment to help keep the anti-stage material rolling off the presses. It certainly seems likely that the more active and more numerous reforming societies used this same tactic of mass purchase and distribution of anti-stage works to help in their battle against public vice.¹⁵ If this is true, Collier's popularity is probably due less to a demand by a large number of readers than to the propagandistic use by the societies of copies passed out to citizens wishing only a morning at church, a cup of coffee, or a walk. Whether many of the recipients of these works read them and believed the arguments cannot be ascertained. That the

works had little effect on the existence of theatres and the continued popularity of plays which were attacked is a matter of record.

The publication of Collier's works kept pace with activities of the reform societies, and some of his opponents had harsh words for these societies. Thomas Brown, for example, in his Letters from the Dead to the Living (first published in 1702), describes the societies as

troops of informers, who are maintain'd by perjury, serve God for gain, and ferret out whores for subsistence. This noble society consists of divines of both churches, fanaticks as well as orthodox saints and sinners, knights of the post, and knights of the elbow, and they are not more unanimously against immorality in their information, than for it in their practice; they avoid no sins in themselves, and will suffer none in any one else. . . . These worthy gentlemen, for promoting the interest of the Crown-Office, and some such honest place, pick harmless words out of plays, to indict the players and squeeze twenty pound a week of them, if they can, for their exposing pride, vanity, hypocrisy, usury, oppression, cheating, and other darling vices of the master reformers, who owe them a grudge, not to be appeas'd without considerable offerings; for money in these cases wipes off all defects.¹⁶

In the epilogue to The Stage-Beaux Toss'd in a Blanket (1704), Gildon also comes down on the reformers, among whom he numbers Collier:

Gentlemen, briefly this has been our Fault,
We more for others than our selves have Thought.
Each Man wou'd piously reform his Neighbour;
To save himself he thinks not worth his Labour.
With Zeal and Sin at once we're strangely warm'd,
And grow more Wicked as we grow Reform'd.
Oh! 'tis a blessed Age, and blessed Nation,
When vice walks cheek by jowl with Reformation.
In short, let each Man's Thoughts first look at home,
And then to Foreign Reformations roam.
If all the Fools and Knaves met here to Day,
Wou'd their own Faults and Follies first Surgy,
We need not fear their Censures of the Play.¹⁷

But not until 1709 did the attacks on the reform societies produce concrete and lasting results. It was on August 15 of that year that the

Reverend Henry Sacheverall delivered a caustic sermon against the societies for the reformation of manners, which he saw as a direct threat to the Church of England:

[Our religion] does not oblige us to charge men at random upon bare surmise and suspicion, or to pry officiously into their lives and secret affairs, and to invade their private rights by usurping a jurisdiction which we have no title to justify, or with a rude air of superiority to obtrude ourselves upon 'em as privy-counsellors and dogmatically censure, rebuke, or advise in our neighbor's proceedings that don't belong to us, neither lie under the verge of our cognizance. Whatever godly and fallacious glosses such troublesome wasps that erect themselves into illegal inquisitors may cast upon their action, they are doubtless the unwarrentable effects of an idle, encroaching, impertinent, and meddling curiosity It is in short the base product of ill-nature, spiritual pride, censoriousness, and sanctified spleen, pretending to carry on the blessed work of reformation by lying, slandering, whispering, backbiting, and tale-bearing, the most express character of the devil, who is emphatically styled the grand accuser of the brethern.¹⁸

Though a Whig administration convicted Sacheverell of opposing reformation, he became a popular hero, and his conviction was the issue which brought the Tories back to power in the elections of 1710. And as Bahlman points out, one could easily forget the existence of the societies after 1710, for their ability to arouse public enthusiasm had been dealt a fatal blow.¹⁹

That Collier sensed the opposition to the reform societies may be indicated by the date of his last claimed contribution to the controversy, A Farther Vindication of the Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage, published in 1708.²⁰ The coincidence of the weakening of the societies (and, thus, their purchasing power) and the cessation of Collier's anti-stage works is even more

noteworthy when viewed in light of remarks made by some of the stage defenders. The author of A Vindication of the Stage (1698), for example, feels that Collier did not see virtue as its own reward; rather, he suggests "that the Fifty Pounds had a greater influence with him, than the stab he suppos'd he should give to Vice and Debauchery."²¹ Thomas Brown also speaks of the lucrative results of Collier's appeal: "fanatics presented the nonjuror, and misers and extortioners gave him bountiful rewards; one . . . laid out threescore pounds . . . [for] the impression [of A Short View], to distribute among the saints, that are zealous for God and mammon at the same time,"²² Gildon too thinks one of the main results of Collier's writings was that he "got a great deal of Money by what he writ against Plays."²³ These responses to Collier's motives probably overstate his concern for money, but it is also fact that large sales of his works were due to the reform societies and that when they became less active so did his publications.²⁴

In addition to the timing of his writings, his persistence in answering stage defenders shows how much he wished to keep the anti-stage position before uncommitted or sympathetic readers. After the success of A Short View, he waited only for responses from Congreve and Vanbrugh before rekindling the reforming fires with his Defence of the Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage, &c. (1699). His apparent strategy was to have the last word after any extensive defense of the stage so that the readers would feel he had countered any objections to his position. He answered James Drake with A Second Defence of the Short View of the Prophaneness and Immorality of the English Stage, &c. (1700); Edward Filmer's A Defence of Plays (1707) prompted his A

Farther Vindication (1708); he also used the occasion of the storm in 1703 to publish Mr. Collier's Dissuasive from the Playhouse (1703) and probably Some Thoughts Concerning the Stage in a Letter to a Lady (1704).²⁵ It made no difference that his defenses of A Short View were essentially repetitious of initial arguments or that they avoided or confused important considerations brought up by his opponents. What seems important rhetorically was that he have the final word, that the necessity for closing the theatres conclude the reflections of those readers who were following the controversy.

Closely associated with the timing and persistence of Collier's attacks is their tone, for it too takes into account the audience to whom the works were directed. Ostensibly, he was directing his views at the playwrights in order to reform their writing, but any reader soon recognizes he means to go far beyond reform. Like the reform societies, he is trying to raise a public outcry against the stage and eventually draw the law down upon actors, playwrights, and theatres. To stir Christian readers who were not familiar with the plays or the authorities which he cites, he had to convey a feeling of moral outrage. Thus, his tone is not merely forceful, but indignant, emotionally incensed, even livid. One example may be seen in his reaction to Vanbrugh's The Relapse in A Short View:

I am quite tired with these wretched Sentences. The sight indeed is horrible, and I am almost unwilling to shew it. However they shall be produced like Malefactors, not for Pomp, but Execution. Snakes and Vipers, must sometimes be look'd on, to destroy them. I can't forbear expressing my self with some warmth under these Provocations. What Christian can be unconcern'd at such intolerable Abuses? What can be a juster Reason for indignation

than Insolence and Atheism? Resentment can never be better shown, nor Aversion more reasonably executed! Nature made the Ferment and Rising of the Blood, for such occasions as This. On what unhappy Times are we fallen! The Oracles of Truth, the Laws of Omnipotence, and the Fate of Eternity are Laught at and despis'd!²⁶

If this reverend critic could be so outraged at Vanbrugh's lines, certainly the reader of A Short View who did not know the play or was unsure of his own judgment about it may have felt the necessity to share Collier's resentment. After all, more than decorum is at stake; Christianity itself is being "Hooted off the Stage."

And his tone could become even more virulent, as when he reacts to the examples of blasphemy he sees in The Relapse, The Provok'd Wife, and Love for Love:

They [these examples] look reeking as it were from Pandaemonium, and almost smell of Fire and Brimstone. This is an Eruption of Hell with a witness! I almost wonder, the smoak of it has not darken'd the Sun, and turn'd the Air to Plagye and Poyson! These are outrageous Provocations; Enough to arm all Nature in Revenge; To exhaust the Judgments, of Heaven, and sink the Island in the Sea!²⁷

This fury is even more amazing in light of the sources he cites, for it has taken some ingenious extrapolation to see "intolerable Abuses" and "outrageous Provocation" of the Christian religion in plays whose language and patterns suggest just the opposite. Sister Rose Anthony sees "his vitriolic sentences" as "the outcome of a temper maddened by what he considered indecency and profanity." She does feel that "occasionally, too, these liberties blunted his judgment" but that many of his outbursts were justified.²⁸ Rather than blunting his judgment, I see the rage resulting from his judgment of the plays. Feigned or

not, the impassioned condemnation functions as a rhetorical conclusion to his arguments; he is relying on emotional persuasion to weld together the citations from the plays and the catastrophic threat to religion which he says the plays pose. He need not spend time proving poetic intent or even that his examples indeed are a moral threat, for the emotion sweeps other considerations of reason aside.

But the tone of outrage is accentuated by one of sarcasm, especially in the form of rhetorical questions. By using sarcasm he appears confident that he is unquestionably correct in his criticism. The tone is most used when he is speaking about specific plays or playwrights, as when he comments on Dryden's King Arthur:

Here we have Genii, and Angels, Cupids, Syrens, and Devils; Venus and St. George, Pan and the Parson, The Hell of Heathenism, and the Hell of Revelation; A fit of Smut, and then a Jest about Original Sin. And why are Truth and Fiction, Heathenism and Christianity, the most Serious and the most Trifling Things blended together, and thrown onto one Form of Diversion" Why is all this done unless it be to ridicule the whole and make one as incredible as the other?²⁹

Of course Collier sees no possible reason for Dryden's use of these characters and settings except to ridicule Christianity, but he provides no proof. He merely continues his questioning until the tone goes from sarcasm to rage and personal incriminations of Dryden. The naive reader could become involved in the castigation, never questioning its validity.

It is not surprising that Collier's diction and tone drew harsh reactions from the playwrights and other defenders of the stage. Almost all of them criticized Collier's fury, and a number of them seemed genuinely shocked by the divine's lack of control. Dryden, in his preface to Fables Ancient and Modern (1700), for example, says that Collier

is too much given to horse-play in his raillery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plough. I will not say, The zeal of God's house has eaten him up; but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility. It might also be doubted whether it were altogether zeal which prompted him to his function to rake into the rubbish of ancient and modern plays; a divine might have employed his pains to better purpose than in the nastiness of Plautus and Aristophanes, whose examples, as they excuse not me, so it might be possibly supposed that he read them not without some pleasure.³⁰

The other playwrights were no less conscious of Collier's outrageous tone, as Thomas D'Urfey indicates in his preface to The Campaigners (1698): "instead of reproving us with a Pastorly Mildness, Charity and Good Nature, [he] gives us the basest language, and with the most scurillous expressions, sometimes raging and even foaming at [the] mouth."³¹ Congreve too produces "a Sample of some of this Gentleman's Figures" and then reflects upon them:

Methinks I hear him pronounce 'em every time I behold 'em, they are almost Noisy and Turbulent, even in the Print. In short, they are Contagious; and I find he that will speak of them, is in great danger to speak like them. But why does Mr. Collier use all this Vehemence in a written Argument? If he were to Preach, I grant it might be necessary for him to make a Noise, that he might be sure to be heard: But why all this Passion upon Paper? Judgment is never Outrageous; and Christianity is ever Meek and Mild.³²

With a reference to St. Chrysostom's description of the mildness of the prophets, Congreve goes on to suggest sarcastically that Collier's bel-lowing was perhaps inspired by the Devil rather than the Holy Ghost. He might better have mentioned the rhetorical effectiveness of these passionate outbursts in the context of an argument which relies heavily on emotional persuasion. If Congreve could "hear" Collier pronouncing his

attacks, it is not unlikely that these sounds found their way to groups of non-readers, either through sermons or informal gatherings. These harangues could doubtless arouse the sleepest attendant at a meeting hosted by the reform societies.

These comments by those playwrights attacked in A Short View are supplemented by remarks from other defenders of the stage who are also very interested in Collier's moral authority. Though his position as an active non-juror verifies his label as a Christian, the tone of his anti-stage works, like his Platonic view of evil, created questions in the minds of his contemporaries about those ethical characteristics they felt a model Christian, especially a clergyman, should try to exhibit. The anonymous writer of Some Remarks upon Mr. Collier's Defence of His Short View of the English Stage (1698), for example, first says that Collier rails "with a gust the Christian Religion never inspired"; he "forgets the noblest gift of Heaven, Charity; proudly Judges and Condemns, finds Guilty or Absolves by his own Authority."³³ Likewise, John Dennis feels that "Mr. Collier is so far from having shewn in his Book [A Short View], either the Meekness of a true Christian, or the Humility of an exemplary Pastor, that he has neither the Reasoning of a Man of Sense in it, nor the Style of a Polite Man, nor the Sincerity of a Honest Man, nor the Humanity of a Gentleman, or a Man of Letters."³⁴ Edward Filmer and Elkanah Settle make similar observations,³⁵ as does Charles Gildon, who says in defense of Congreve:

If he [Collier] had been that Good Christian, or that Honest Man he wou'd be thought, he shou'd have shewn more Candor and Charity, than to put the worst, and most scandalous Construction on any Gentleman of Honour and Probity's Meaning; for I dare, in Mr.

Congreve's Name, Assert that the impious design which this Author has coin'd out of his own head, was far from his thought, and where there is any way to think well of a Man, that way ought certainly to be taken, both by a Christian, and an honest Man.³⁶

Even Collier himself, without realizing the self-incriminating accuracy of his comment, says that "Railing is a mean, and unchristian Talent, and oftentimes a sign of a desperate Cause, and a desperate Conscience."³⁷ That Collier's techniques of argument have been generally passed over by modern critics who accept his "moral" position, may be indicative of the rhetorical effectiveness of rage and sarcasm in the tone of any moral argument and one key to why he used them. But those contemporaries who questioned that tone argued that he was not an expert on morality in the drama, and that his "railing" should not lend credence to his authority.

Perhaps one of the main reasons for Collier's employment of such rhetoric was that it conveniently thwarted the reader's concentration on his use of evidence and the logic of his arguments. As mentioned in the last chapter, the defenders of the stage were quick to object to Collier's criticism of language and actions in the plays without reference to character or context. This misuse of evidence was compounded by misleading and inaccurate quotations as well as comments about passages never cited. Congreve makes his "False & Imperfect Citations" clear when he points out such things as a partial quotation from The Old Bachelor, which misrepresents Bellmour's attitude about salvation, or a misquotation from The Double-Dealer, which makes it appear that Cynthia ridicules marriage.³⁸ Similarly, Vanbrugh, D'Urfey, and Settle (in defense of Vanbrugh and Dryden), among others, point to specific instances of Collier's manipulation of quotations.³⁹ Collier's most common defense for omitting evidence which he says damns various

playwrights is that it is "too Lewd to be quoted." In fact, when the defenders quote these lines, however, they not only look tame next to many of Collier's, but suggest the quality of mind which could detect (or create) the "smut" so obvious to this prying divine.

Even more critically revealing than his misuse of citations, though, are his explanations of evidence, his organization of chapters, and his dependence upon logical fallacies to construct convincing rhetoric. He does not restrict himself to contemporary writers but makes use of whatever writers and ages appear to lend credence to his position. He tries to show, for example, how the ancient, heathen poets were more decent in their use of language and action than English playwrights who had the benefit of Christianity. But he does not attempt to analyze the ancient plays to find reasons why a writer like Terence did not "so much as touch upon an ill Subject before" women. Rather, he chooses to intuit the intentions of the poets from what he says is not in the plays, mainly indecent language. An indication of Collier's peculiar imagination at work creating evidence about the moral natures and intentions of the poets comes in his reference to Sophocles' Antigone. He asks the reader to imagine, as he obviously has done, what Haemon and Antigone might have done had Sophocles brought "these two Lovers upon the Stage together."⁴⁰ It never occurs to him that Sophocles might have had some reason (perhaps related to plot or staging), other than preventing an exhibition of concupiscence, for not allowing these "lovers" on stage together. Thus, his proof that the heathen plays were more innocent than the English (especially contemporary) plays rests not on objectively gathered evidence, but on his own assertions: first,

that there is less smut and indecency in ancient plays and second, that the ancient poets' intentions were more moral.

One key to Collier's arguments, then, is his commentary on evidence (or what he calls evidence), as may be seen even more clearly when he provides an actual passage from the dedication to Aureng-Zebe as proof of Dryden's abuse of religion and scripture: "Our Minds (says he) are perpetually wrought on by the Temperament of our Bodies, which makes me suspect they are nearer Allied than either our Philosophers, or School Divines will allow them to be." Collier makes no attempt to place the statement into context, which would have shown it to be an explanation of how men are changeable. (Dryden goes on to indicate why he might change the conclusion of his play.) Instead, Collier sees this as an example of "horrid Suppositions": "The meaning is, he [Dryden] suspects our Souls are nothing but Organic Matter: Or, in plain English, our Souls are nothing but our Bodies; and then when the Body dies, you may guess what becomes of them!"⁴¹ Collier's interpretation is preposterous. Dryden has mentioned nothing of souls in his statement and only suggests that the body and mind are "nearer allied" than most learned men feel, not that "our Souls are nothing but our Bodies." That this kind of blatant distortion exists in Collier's anti-stage writings may be indicative of his inability to understand any work or his desire to deceive his readers about the intentions of the Restoration playwrights. In either case, he might have benefitted from what Dryden says just two sentences before the passage Collier quotes:

The most judicious writer is sometime mistaken after all his care; but the hasty critic, who judges on a view, is full as liable to be deceived. Let him first

consider all the arguments which the author had, to write this, or to design the other, before he arraigns him of a fault; and then perhaps, on several thoughts, he will find his reason oblige him revoke his censure.⁴²

An examination of Collier's later defenses of A Short View shows he had few "second thoughts" and that "his reason seldom obliged him to revoke his censure."

Another example of his interpretation of evidence comes in Chapter IV when he evaluates poetic justice in Restoration drama. His reasoning here is supposed to be inductive, but he states flatly before presenting any evidence that the aim of the "Stage-Poets" is to eradicate "the Lines of Virtue and Vice," putting "Lewdness into a Thriving condition" and creating an atmosphere where pleasure is absolute and atheism is admired. With this "objective" introduction he then spends two pages citing the "Men of Breeding and Figure" from nine plays.⁴³ His assumption, based upon his opinion of persons of quality, is that these characters are designed for imitation by the audience and that they do not change in the course of the plays. He treats them all as a group, devoting to each a few sentences, at most, which he feels provide sufficient evidence to convince his readers. He then confidently makes his inductive leap: "To sum up the Evidence. A Fine Gentleman, is a fine Whoring, Swearing, Smutty, Atheistical Man."⁴⁴ The conclusion shows Collier blindly "leaping" over proofs of the evidence he has cited, but the pattern looks logical. What he fails to do here, and in general throughout his attacks when he uses specific plays, is 1) to provide a large enough sample of evidence for the sweeping conclusions he draws and 2) to guarantee the truth of his evidence.

But misinterpretation of evidence is not limited to the plays. In Chapter VI--"The Opinion of Paganism, of the Church, and State, concerning the Stage"--Collier proves a master at assembling authorities against the stage, but as James Drake says, "he presumes upon the ignorance of the Readers, and imposes arbitrarily and magisterially what sense he pleases upon every thing, and despotically coins Citations, which he forces upon 'em for genuine, upon no better warrant than his own Will and Pleasure."⁴⁵ Like his earlier use of ancient playwrights, Collier's use of "the most celebrated Heathen Philosophers, Orators, and Historians seems to invalidate his statements to Dryden and Congreve. He tells Dryden, for example, that unless "he can prove Heathenism, and Christianity the same," his use of Plautus and Terence as dramatic authorities "will do him little service."⁴⁶ He later repeats that "there is no Arguing from Heathanism to Christianity" in his answer to Congreve's Amendments.⁴⁷ His dependence upon "Heathen" authorities here becomes even more significant when the reader realizes that the validity of his later citations from the early Church Fathers (in Chapter VI) depends upon a condemnation of all ancient plays and playwrights. But his use of these authorities is not only self-contradictory; Elkanah Settle observes that he makes highly selective references to less than ten authorities out of hundreds he might have cited. This omission of a large enough sample again suggests the weakness of his arguments against the stage. In addition, of those authorities Collier cited Settle objects to his interpretation of Plutarch,⁴⁸ and says that Ovid does not object to the stage; rather, he exposes practices (picking up women) related to "the Pit, Box and Galleries." Significantly, Collier has omitted

passages immediately preceding those he cited where Ovid tells his young libertine to also "forage the Temples of the Gods; for he may find the same Game to fly at there too."⁴⁹ Collier avoided this reference because, as Settle mentions, the logic of his argument would then have required the closing of churches as well as theatres. John Dennis questions all of Collier's references to ancient authorities and argues most convincingly against his use of Livy and Valerius Maximus, accusing him of misrepresenting and misquoting what these two writers said. In both instances it seems the references are not to tragedy or comedy but to "the Rudeness of the Ludi Fescennini" and to "The Combats of the Gladiators."⁵⁰ Similarly, James Drake shows how Collier "allows himself a very Christian latitude" in his "rare Paraphrasing" of Livy and Valerius Maximus.⁵¹

When Collier moves to "the Censures of the State" upon the theatres, his evidence continues to be questioned by defenders of the stage. Drake and Dennis, the two critics who deal most specifically with Collier's sources, spend a number of pages citing and translating references Collier had paraphrased to advantage, but the most interesting ones to Englishmen involve the statutes under Elizabeth and James. As a recent critic, Benjamin Hellinger, points out, these laws

are directed against rogues and sturdy beggars and are part of a series of Elizabethan anti-vagabond laws. Collier completely misrepresents the intent of this legislation. He probably knew full well that at the time these laws were enacted the acting companies were coming directly under the protection of the crown. The capital punishment which Collier strongly implies is meted out to actors who do not "give over" is in fact only for dangerous rogues who have returned to England without permission after suffering transportation out of the realm.⁵²

To imply an anti-stage bias by either Elizabeth or James by citing these statutes is to assume that those who read his arguments knew nothing of the development of English drama. Since defenders of the stage did recognize Collier's false implications here, the citation is further confirmation that Collier was not interested in convincing and reforming the playwrights; his hope was for an uninformed but zealous and volatile public which could force the theatres to close.⁵³

Collier's citations from Church Councils and Fathers present further examples of his misuse of evidence. Indicative of his method of dealing with these authorities is his source for them. James Thorpe III has noted that Collier's "display of learning in patristic writings and church history was fraudulent" because most of the information comes from Arnaud de Bourbon's Traité de la comedia et des spectacles, selon la tradition de l'Eglise, tiré des Conciles et des Saints Pères. 1669.⁵⁴ Though the defenders of the stage did not recognize this source, they did accuse Collier of misinterpreting his evidence. Those who responded to Collier felt the use of the Fathers' reactions to the ancient theatre was irrelevant, for as Settle says,

Our Plays are no Heathen Compositions; our Authors and Auditors profess one Faith; our Stage lies under no Ecclesiastical Reprimand from the Fathers of our Church: In short we have so many favourable Aspects, and all that Weight on our side, in ballance between 'em, enough to silence even Calumny itself.⁵⁵

Collier not only minimizes the distinction between Restoration and ancient drama, but as Drake points out, translates some words in such a way that "the unlearned Reader might perhaps be induc'd to believe, that the Father's [here, Tertullian] quarrel lay against Lincolns-Inn-Fields, and Covent-Garden."⁵⁶ Critics like Dennis and Drake were also

quick to remind Collier that the Fathers were reacting principally to those activities of the ancient theatre, such as gladiator combats, chariot races, and pantomimes, which were brutal, lewd, and idolatrous. In countering these objections Collier had to argue even more emphatically that the Fathers did not really distinguish among the various types of entertainment; indeed, most of them were strongly opposed to any type of diversion.

But this ascetic characteristic of the Fathers opened Collier's use of them as authorities to further charges. When he quotes "the Author de Spectaculis" as counseling against any pleasure except reading in the scriptures,⁵⁷ Edward Filmer questions the Fathers' concept of man's nature:

All our Time, say these good Fathers, is little enough for the great Work of our Salvation; we should be perpetually reading the holy Scriptures, bewailing our Sins, deprecating the Horrors of Hell, or meditating on the Joys of Heaven. This, say they, is true Pleasure, this ought to be the only Employment, the only Delight of a good Christian. Very true; all this we should do, were we able; or did God require it as indispensably necessary to Salvation. But alas! we are weak and frail, and God is infinitely good and merciful. He knoweth whereof we are made, he remembreth that we are but Dust; and therefore will not require more at our Hands than we are able to perform.⁵⁸

Filmer enforces this essentially Thomistic point of view by quoting a prelate of the Church of England and Bishop Sanderson as favoring lawful diversions, such as plays. He could also have made reference to Father Caffero's letter, as Peter Motteux did in the published version of his play, Beauty in Distress (1698), which uses St. Thomas (as well as Alexander ab Alexandro and St. Antonious, Archbishop of Florence), to counter the ascetic opposition of many of the Fathers to worldly

pleasure.⁵⁹ Likewise, Elkanah Settle found that the duties of a Christian suggested by St. Chrysostom and St. Jerome (through Collier) overlooked man's weaknesses:

These Precepts of the Psalmist and the Apostle, are indeed the highest Duty of Christianity. But as we are but Men, 'tis a Duty too weighty to lye upon Humane Weakness, without any Intervals of some lighter Alleviations of the Cares and Labours of Life. Were Life to be intirely divided between the Prayer-book, the Psalter and the Plough, Rejoycing in God is that Exercise of Piety, requiring so Intent and Exalted a Meditation, that the weakness of Humane Nature would hardly be able to keep up the Soul on so sublime a flight, without flagging her Wing, and Devotion so severely tyed to the Alter, I fear, would make but a very lean Sacrifice.⁶⁰

But Settle's reminder of the "weakness of Humane Nature" would have had even more force had he pointed out Collier's inconsistency in using the asceticism of the Church Fathers as evidence. For he might have shown that while in Chapter VI of A Short View Collier wishes man (and certainly clergymen) to deny those things of this world, such as the stage, he had in other places defended the clergy's acquisition of "Riches and Power" on earth.⁶¹ The only resolution to this kind of contradiction is an admission of Collier's attempt to manipulate evidence persuasively. He is able to present a sweeping and continuous stream of Christian authorities whose attitudes, as he quotes and paraphrases them, denounce any pleasures of this world, which certainly include the stage. Collier means to establish a religious tradition for his own outrage to reinforce the emotional impact of his thesis; bludgeoning a reader's guilt about what is sinful with warnings from the Church Fathers seems to obviate any concern on his part with proving the validity of his evidence.

Collier organizes not only his evidence but his critical comments in order to minimize any rational questioning of his arguments. He does this mainly by leading the reader away from evidence he has cited with a series of questions, almost always related to the moral consequences of the "immoral" practices he has been making reference to. This movement to the frightening ends which a sinner (actor, actress, playwright, or theatre-goer) must surely meet takes advantage of the fears of his reader. As might be expected, this tactic is coupled with the outrage and sarcasm mentioned earlier to provide a stirring indication of just how dangerous the stage is. A good example of his rhetorical management occurs at the end of Chapter II on "The Profaneness of the Stage" in A Short View. He cites examples of profanity from ancient plays, then shows his disgust when he shifts, without evidence, to "the Modern Poets, [who] proceed upon the Liberties of Seneca, Their Madmen are very seldom reckon'd with. They are profane without Censure, and defie the Living God with success." Still with no evidence he goes on to build his case by emotional implication:

Must God be treated like an Idol, and the Scriptures banter'd like Homers Elysium, and Hesiods Theogonia? Are these the Returns we make Him for his Supernatural Assistance? . . . Is there no Diversion without Insulting the God that made us, the Goodness that would save us, and the Power that can damn us? Let us not flatter our selves, Words won't go for Nothing. Profaness is a most Provoking Contempt, and a Crime of the deepest dye. To break through the Laws of a Kingdom is bad enough; but to make Ballads upon the Statute-Book and a Jest of Authority, is much worse. Atheists may fancy what they please, but God will Arise and Maintain his own Cause, and Vindicate his Honour in due time.⁶²

To enforce the threat of God's punishment, he states in the next and

concluding paragraph of the chapter that "Profaness" is "grating to Christian Ears, dishonourable to the Majesty of God And in a Word, It tends to no point, unless it be to . . . teach the Language of the Damn'd."

Not only is the reader led to conclusions which brand the stage and playwrights sinful, but these conclusions usually encompass sweeping generalizations which obliterate any moral distinctions among the plays. Any reaction to Collier's argument, then, is greatly affected by the way he concludes sections (on plays, playwrights, or authorities), chapters, and the work itself with the catastrophic effects to be expected from contemporary drama. Thus, after nearly three-hundred pages of a "short" view, he leaves the reader with a final vision of the stage:

It cherishes those Passions, and rewards those Vices, which 'tis the business of Reason to discountenance. It strikes at the Root of Principle, draws off the Inclinations from Virtue, and spoils good Education: 'Tis the most effectual means to baffle the Force of Discipline, to emasculate peoples Spirits, and Debauch their Manners. How many of the Unwary have these Syrens devour'd? And how often has the best Blood been tainted with this Infection? What Disappointment of Parents, what Confusion in Families, and What Beggery in Estates have been hence occasion'd? And which is still worse, the Mischief spreads dayly, and the Malignity grows more envenom'd. The Feavour works up towards Madness, and will scarcely endure to be touch'd.⁶³

After this look at Collier's rhetorical tactics, it should be obvious that he did not expect reasoned reactions to his arguments. But when his contemporary critics did analyze his logic, faults and contradictions were apparent. To see more closely some of his logical fallacies it is only necessary to cite a few examples. In discussing Dryden's Amphitryon he points out that Dryden said he departed from the plan of Plautus and Molière because "the difference of our Stage from

the Roman and the French did so require it." But he does not let Dryden explain that difference; instead he provides the explanation himself, as well as some interesting reasoning:

That is, our Stage must be much more Licentious. For you are to observe that Mr. Dryden, and his Fraternity, have help'd to debauch the Town, and Poyson their Pleasures to an unusual Degree: And therefore the Diet must be dress'd to the Palate of the Company.⁶⁴

Collier reasons in a circle, for to be debauched the town must once have been innocent, and being innocent, would have required innocent plays from the playwrights if his premise that the playwrights had to answer the "Palate" of the audience is granted. Faced with these demands by the audience, how could Dryden have produced immoral and profane plays to debauch that audience? Collier continues his argument by using a non sequitur as "proof" that Dryden designed his play to satisfy the "Scepticks" he had created.⁶⁵ He also often begs the question, as in misrepresenting Dryden's statement about delight being the "Chief End of Comedy." In the process of citing the statement and arguing its consequences, he falsely restates Dryden's position in a premise to his proposition:

If Delight without Restraint, or Distinction, without Conscience or Shame, is the Supreme Law of Comedy, 'twere well if we had less on 't. Arbitrary Pleasure, is more dangerous than Arbitrary Power. Nothing is more Brutal than to be abandon'd to Appetite; And nothing more wretched than to serve in such a Design.⁶⁶

Dryden had not implied anything like "Arbitrary Pleasure" or "Delight without Restraint," but Collier states this condition as if Dryden, and indeed all contemporary playwrights, were only concerned with pleasure in the comedies they wrote.

Even though the defenders of the stage caught many of his errors, Collier kept coming back to the attack, providing his less perceptive readers with more fallacies and righteous insistence. James Drake summarizes Collier's method and establishes the basis for the success his works had:

Mr. Collier whose business all thro his Book is Invective, not Argument, lays himself forth with all the Pomp of Formal Eloquence, and Vehemence of Expression, that he is able, to aggravate the crime, and amplifie the guilt of the Poets not to prove it. He is more sollicitous to possess his Reader, than to convince him, and for that reason lets slip the circumstance of proof as not very material, because he found it wou'd tye him up to strict Argument, and close Reasoning, which is not for his purpose, and insists upon the General charge of Debauchery and Impiety; which allowing him all the Liberties of Declamation and Harangue, give him ample Field-room to publish and display his Parts, and his Malice together; which he does most egregiously, and Flourishes most triumphantly. Never did learned Recorder insult poor Culprit in more formidable Oratory, than he does the Poets.⁶⁷

It is no wonder that men like Drake, Dryden, Congreve, Vanbrugh, Settle, and Filmer probably became frustrated in trying to burst Collier's balloon of popularity, however accurate their critical darts: It seemed to rise into the eighteenth century with an endless supply of the divine's reforming air and was kept aloft by such other sources of heated wind as Ridpath, Bedford, and Law.

NOTES

¹G. F. Lamb, "A Short View of Jeremy Collier," English, 7 (1949), 274-275; E. E. Stoll, "Literature No 'Document,'" Modern Language Review, 19(1924), 149.

²The London Stage 1660-1800, Part 1: 1660-1700, ed. William Van Lennep (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), clxxiv.

³The London Stage 1660-1800, Part 2: 1700-1729, ed. Emmett L. Avery (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960), clx.

⁴Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 14-17.

⁵The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), 293.

⁶*Ibid.*, 289-291.

⁷Loftis, p. 17.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 18-19. From available evidence, Loftis suggests that a small percentage of the total population attended the theatres.

⁹The Occasional Paper, Vol. III, No. ix, of Plays and Masquerades (London, 1719), p. 6. His remarks about the ill effects of the stage on business continue for the next six pages.

¹⁰The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd (London, 1699), epistle dedicatory.

¹¹The Moral Revolution of 1688. Yale Historical Publications. The Wallace Noteseen Essays, No. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 19 & 23.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 67, 22-23, 41 & 43.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

¹⁴"The S.P.C.K. and the Stage," Theatre Notebook, 11 (1957), pp. 61-62.

¹⁵In this connection, it is interesting to note the number of publications by Arthur Bedford (see n. 2, Chap. II) while he was head of the Bristol society.

¹⁶8th ed. (London, 1744), pp. 46-47.

¹⁷This entire passage was in italics. Gildon also criticizes the societies in The Post-Man Robb'd of His Mail (London, 1719), pp. 32, 35, 38 and 329.

¹⁸Bahlman, pp. 94-95. Dennis makes a connection between the timing of publications by Collier, Bedford, and Law and threatened Jacobite revolt and concludes: "Now all these Attacks upon the Stage have been Attacks upon the Government, and those three worthy Persons seem to me to have been at the Beck of some certain Superiors, and always ready at their Command to divert the People of Great Britain from their real Danger, by giving them Alarms in a wrong Place" (Critical Works, II, 321).

¹⁹Bahlman, p. 97.

²⁰It also seems significant that only seven anti-stage works were published between 1710 and 1726, the year of Collier's death and William Law's initial onslaught. Of these, only Bedford's The Great Abuse of Musick (1711) was published before 1718, perhaps indicating how much of the market had been due to the societies.

²¹pp. 3-4. The fifty pounds is also referred to in Gildon's The Stage-Beaux, pp. 27 & 34, and in The Stage Acquitted where Fairly says, "There is a party, that in spite of Truth, Judgment, and good Sense, cry up Mr. Collier's Book [But in time] the Town will reflect, as we have done, of the real and undoubted use of the Stage, and agree that Mr. Collier had better have shewn more candour and honesty, and not preferr'd 50l. and buffoonry to good sense and honesty" (pp. 85-86).

²²Letters, p. 46.

²³Post-Man, p. 213.

²⁴In addition to Professor Scouten's findings about the SPCK's purchases (n. 19 above), John Oldmixon, in The History of England (p. 192) reveals that several wealthy men sent Collier money when A Short View was published.

²⁵Graham D. Harley, "A Note on the Jeremy Collier Stage Controversy," N & Q, 18(1971), 44-46.

²⁶A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (London, 1698), p. 80. Two articles written in the 1940's discuss Collier's style in relation to the contemporary comments of Father John Constable, whose Reflections Upon Accuracy of Style (London, 1731) was actually written in part about Collier at the height of the controversy in 1703. Helen Maxwell Hooker, in "Father John Constable on Jeremy Collier," PQ, 23(1944), 375-378, quotes Constable about Collier's writing: "'These concise Sentences, these short Cuts, these continual Metaphors, and that which I call the Tic-Tac, of an Antithesis, strikes

indeed at first, but will seldom bear the test of a reflection'" (376). William K. Wimsatt, Jr., in "Father John Constable on Collier," PQ, 24 (1945), 119-122, adds Constable's comments that Collier's style was "'a new set of words and phrases,' 'short and smart,' 'gay,' metaphorical, and pedantic, and those who affected it made an 'ungrounded pretense of writing to the humour of the Age,' though as a matter of fact 'such vicious methods' were 'far from being the humour of the age.'" It is Wimsatt's own observation that "Whether derived from Rymer or not, Collier's style shares with Rymer's the element of 'humour and bluff force,' as Spingarn has described it, 'the scolding tone, the short sentences, the colloquial contradictions of speech, the proverbial phrases . . . the imagery . . . of the shop and street'" (119).

²⁷A Short View, pp. 84-85. Other examples of rage occur on the following pages: 95, 162, 179, 184, 186-187, 281, 283, 285-288.

²⁸The Collier Stage Controversy, pp. 296-297.

²⁹A Short View, p. 188.

³⁰Dryden's "Of Dramatic Poesy" and other Critical Essays, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1962), II, 293. Dryden also refers to Collier in "Cymon and Iphigenia," in The Poetical Works of John Dryden, eds. Joseph Warton, John Warton and others (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1867), p. 278:

In malice witty, and with venom fraught,
He makes me speak the things I never thought
Compute the gains of his ungovern'd zeal;
Ill suits his cloth the praise of railing well.

A clue to Wycherley's apparent failure to respond to Collier may be found in his posthumous Collection of Maxims and Moral Reflections: "The Rage and Choller of our Enemies, instead of begetting the like in us, should be a Cure for it, and make us pity them rather for Madmen, than revenge our selves on them for Enemies; since they are our Seconds in being our Foes, and weaken themselves by endeavouring to be too strong for us" (The Complete Works of William Wycherley, ed. Montague Summers (Soho: The Nonesuch Press, 1924), IV, 141).

³¹(London, 1698), p. 2. D'Urfey also accuses Collier of "Stubborn Will" (pp. 12-13).

³²Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations, in The Complete Works of William Congreve, ed. Montague Summers (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1923), III, 180-181.

³³p. 11.

³⁴The Usefulness of the Stage, in The Critical Works, I, 147.

³⁵Edward Filmer, A Defence of Plays (London, 1707), p. 74.
Elkanah Settle, A Defence of Dramatick Poetry (London, 1698), p. 118.

³⁶Phaeton (London, 1698), preface.

³⁷A Defence of the Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage (London, 1699), pp. 4-5.

³⁸Amendments, in Works, III, pp. 181-182 & 184-185.

³⁹John Vanbrugh, A Short Vindication of the Relapse and the Provok'd Wife (London, 1698), in The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, eds. Bonamy Dobrée and Geoffrey Webb (Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1927), I, 207. D'Urfey, p. 23. Settle, Defence, p. 108ff., and A Farther Defence of Dramatick Poetry (London, 1698), passim.

⁴⁰A Short View, p. 29.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 68.

⁴²John Dryden, ed. George Saintsbury (New York: N.P., N.D.), I, 342. In Dryden's letter to Peter Mottreux--which prefaces Beauty in Distress (London, 1698)--he blames Collier and critics like him by noting that

When to common sense they give the lie,
And turn distorted words to blasphemy,
They give the scandal; and the wise discern,
Their glosses teach an age, too apt to learn.
(ll. 11-14)

⁴³The Mock Astrologer, The Spanish Friar, The Country Wife, The Old Bachelor, The Double Dealer, Don Sebastian, Love for Love, The Provok'd Wife, and The Relapse are all treated on pages 142-143.

⁴⁴A Short View, p. 143.

⁴⁵p. 329.

⁴⁶A Short View, pp. 148-149.

⁴⁷A Defence, pp. 84-85.

⁴⁸Settle, Defence, p. 24. James Thorpe, III, in his dissertation, "Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698): A Critical Edition," Diss. Yale, 1969, p. 237, also says that Collier misrepresents Plutarch here, for the reference comes from a discussion by several characters who are suggesting appropriate after-dinner entertainment. One character says new comedy would be good but not old comedy or tragedy. Another character considers low farce inappropriate, but there is no reference to the theatre.

⁴⁹Settle, Defence, pp. 28-29. Also, James Drake, pp. 55-57.

⁵⁰Critical Works, I, 173-174.

⁵¹Drake, pp. 44-48.

⁵²"A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, by Jeremy Collier: A Critical Edition," Diss. NYU, 1970, p. 294.

⁵³Settle, Defence, pp. 67-68. To show Queen Mary's favorable attitude toward the stage (and the church's), Settle quotes William Payne's sermon on the death of the queen.

⁵⁴Thorpe, p. 252.

⁵⁵Settle, Defence, p. 67; Drake, pp. 21-22; Dennis, Critical Works, I, 189; Filmer, p. 151.

⁵⁶Drake, p. 30.

⁵⁷A Short View, pp. 261-264.

⁵⁸pp. 141-142.

⁵⁹Dennis, Critical Works, I, 193, invokes St. Thomas in pointing out the lawfulness of drama; D'Urfey, in The Campaigners, pp. 7-8, cites Reverend Thomas Randolph's defense of the stage in The Muses Looking Glass; and the anonymous author of The Stage Acquitted, pp. 87-90, cites St. James in opposition to the necessity of leading an ascetic life.

⁶⁰Defence, pp. 69-70.

⁶¹Defence of the Short View, p. 117.

⁶²A Short View, pp. 94-96.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 287-288.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 182.

⁶⁵He says, "To what purpose else does Jupiter appear in the shape of Jehovah? Why are the incomunicable Attributes burlesqu'd, and Omnipotence applyed to Acts of Infamy? To what end can such Horrible stuff as this serve, unless to expose the Notion, and extinguish the Belief of a Deity (p. 182)?" Of course there may be many reasons for Dryden's characterization of Jupiter, but Collier falsely assumes there can only be one intention, and that it is evil.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 163-164.

⁶⁷p. 139.

CHAPTER IV
THE STAGE/WORLD METAPHOR:
MORAL DESIGN OR PATTERN FOR VICE?

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries men like Stephen Gosson, William Rankins, John Rainoldes, and William Gager attacked the stage and those associated with it for moral abuses which they said it propagated. To its defense came Thomas Heywood with An Apology for Actors in 1612. Significantly, he prefaced the treatise with a poem:

The world's a Theater, the earth a Stage,
Which God, and nature doth with Actors fill,
Kings have their entrance in due equipage,
And some there parts play well and others ill.
The best no better are (in this Theater,)
Where every humor's fitted in his kinde,
This a true subiects acts, and that a Traytor,
The first applauded, and the last confin'd
This plaies an honest man, and that a knaue
A Gentle person this, and he a clowne
One man is ragged, and another braue.
All men haue parts, and each man acts his owne.

Some Citizens, some Soldiers, borne to aduenter,
Sheepheards and Sea-men; then our play's begun,
When we are borne, and to the world first enter,
And all finde Exits when their parts are done.
If then the world a Theater present,
As by the roundnesse it appeares most fit,
Built with starre-galleries of hye ascent,
In which Iehoue doth as spectator sit.
And chief determiner to 'applaud the best,
And their indeuours crowne with more then merit.
But by their euill actions doomes the rest,
To end disgrac't whilst others praise inherit.
He that denyes then Theaters should be,
He may as well deny a world to me.

As Frances A. Yates points out, the controlling metaphor here asserts that "Heywood sees the cosmic theatre as the great moral testing ground on which all men play the parts of their lives in the presence of God."¹

Just as the world could be seen as a theatre with God serving as both judging audience and Divine Dramatist, the theatre was seen as a microcosm of the world, dramatizing the actions of men through the judging perspective of the playwright. Yates' book, Theatre of the World, in fact tries to show how the theatres during and after Shakespeare--especially The Globe--were architecturally designed to reflect this cosmic metaphor, which the playwrights felt was basic to their drama.² Thomas B. Stroup, who has traced the development of this metaphor and discussed its importance in English drama from 1585 to 1642, suggests that the concept of cosmic drama existed before and after the cycle plays: "The Fathers of the Church as well as the Neoplatonists and Renaissance humanists, repeating a classical metaphor, had likened the world to a stage on which the Christian is tested."³ He shows that the metaphor was repeated by St. Augustine, St. Chrisostom, Sir Thomas More, Erasmus, Sir Philip Sidney, Roger Asham, and John Donne among many others in pointing out man's relation to God.⁴ For these men, and more importantly for the playwrights of Elizabethan England, the metaphor meant a way of depicting man's position in God's divine plan, of dramatically portraying the struggle (with its warnings and promises) toward salvation. Ann Richter explains the importance of the image for Elizabethans:

The play, holding a mirror up to nature, was bound to reflect the reality represented by its audience. Yet this audience was also forced to recognize the encroachments of illusion upon its own domain . . . [some] playgoers carried the language and gestures of the drama away with them at the conclusion of the performance, for use in the world outside. Most important of all, beyond these specific habits lay a profound awareness of the play metaphor which

seems to have been one of the characteristics of the period. In sermons and song-books, chronicles and popular pamphlets, Elizabethans were constantly being reminded of the fact that life tends to imitate the theatre.⁵

Righter goes on to say that the playwrights used the metaphor to suggest such things as "the nature of deceivers, the splendour of man's life and its transience, the inexorability of Fortune, or the character of Fortune, or the character of individual moments of time."⁶ Harriet B. Hawkins also points out that "the idea that the world itself was God's theater gave cosmic significance to the contemporary [Elizabethan] stage," especially in showing that the dissembling or feigning on stage "was analogous to the feigning inherent in ordinary life, and that it was also a highly significant feigning that could reveal truth and thus teach men in the 'theatre of the world' of their own nature."⁷ Though Stroup feels that the playwrights' use of this concept to pattern their plays began to fade as the seventeenth century wore on and was probably "pretty well lost to later ages," he shows that Milton and Bunyan both employed the metaphor.⁸ Also, there seems to be both critical and dramatic evidence that the metaphor survived through the Restoration period and that the best dramatists were able to make excellent use of the same devices--though at times modified--which Stroup discusses. For example, Aubrey Williams has noted that "from the beginning to the end of that century [the 17th] one finds the image of God the Divine Playwright almost every place one turns in Anglican discourse on the divine governance of the world."⁹ As with Elizabethan dramatists, the Restoration playwrights could thus use a metaphor which had remained a commonplace for readers and audiences through its use in sermons and

other apologetic literature. To support the artistic applications of the concept of the Theatrum mundi, Professor Williams shows how the metaphor functions similarly for literary men and divines, especially when it is applied to explanations of poetic and Providential justice.¹⁰ Though he emphasizes references in Rymer, Dennis, and of course, Congreve, the use and understanding of the metaphor is pervasive among the critics and the playwrights of the Restoration period. Indeed, as an examination of the contributions to the Collier controversy should reveal, the playwrights and critics were well aware of the important moral function served by seeing the world as a stage and the stage as a microcosm, including the corollary conditions of variety, pageantry, and Providential testing, reward, and punishment.

To see how important the concept of cosmic drama was to the plays after the Restoration, comments by those playwrights directly attacked by Collier are revealing. In the preface to An Evening's Love: or the Mock Astrologer (1671), which Collier included in his "evidence" of Dryden's immoral purposes,¹¹ Dryden says that "Comedy consists, though of low persons, yet of natural actions and characters; I mean such humours, adventures, and designs as are to be found and met with in the world."¹² In a critical piece prefixed to The Rival Ladies (1664), he notes the relationship between the stage and the world while questioning the creation of a play: "For the stage being the representation of the world, and the actions in it, how can it be imagined that the picture of human life can be more exact than life itself?"¹³ Such comments may seem insignificant unless it is noted that they occur in context with observations about how a playwright creates and structures a play.

Related to other comments by Dryden about the nature of English drama (including its variety and Providential order and justice), which I will cite later, it seems clear that the metaphor of the stage as a microcosm was a functional premise for Dryden's playwriting.

Thomas D'Urfey adds another dimension to the metaphor by quoting a passage from Thomas Randolph's The Muses Looking Glass about a "Country Lass" who kept her hands clean because she could see them, but allowed her face to become filthy until:

"At last, within a Pail, for Country Lasses
Have oft you know, no other Looking-glasses,
She view'd her dirty Face, and doubtless would
Have blush'd, if through so much dirt she could.
At last, within the Water, that I say,
That shew'd the Dirt, she wash'd the Dirt away.
So Comedies, as Poets still intend 'em,
Serve first to shew your faults, and then to mend 'em."¹⁴

Even though D'Urfey's artistic talents may be questionable, his use of Randolph's metaphor of the stage as a mirror image of the world shows that he is conscious of the playwright's intentions as an artist. The suggestion of a "Looking-Glass" enforces even more strongly the concept of the play as an image, a product of the playwright's perception of the world as it is modified by his imagination. This metaphoric link strengthens the association of the playwright and God as creators of man's drama: the playwright's microcosmic creation reflecting the macrocosm of God's work. In A Short Vindication Vanbrugh, too, says that "The Stage is a Glass for the World to view itself in; People ought therefore to see themselves as they are; if it makes their Faces too Fair, they won't know they are Dirty, and by consequence will neglect to wash 'em."¹⁵ Vanbrugh has not brought up this image as a second

thought to slap back at Collier, for his prologue to The Provok'd Wife (1697) begins with the same use of the metaphor:

Since 'tis the Intent and Business of the Stage,
To Copy out the Follies of the Age;
To hold to every Man a Faithful Glass,
And shew him of what Species he's an Ass.¹⁶

Congreve reveals his view of the stage as a "little world" when arguing about the types of characters which should be represented on stage. He indicates that just because "the Stage is the Image of the World," strict arithmetic correlations--such as Collier made about the women in The Double Dealer (1647)¹⁷--are not valid. Quite obviously, Congreve feels the stage reflects the world, not in exact ratios, but in artistic proportions which best deliver a pleasing moral to the audience.¹⁸ As he has Mr. Betterton say in the prologue to The Mourning Bride (1697):

To please and move has been our Poet's Theme,
Art may direct, but Nature is his aim;
And Nature miss'd, in vain he boasts his Art,
For only Nature can affect the Heart.¹⁹

Though Wycherley apparently made no specific response to Collier, his poem, "To a Vain, Young Courtier; Occasion'd by his Speaking Contemptibly of the Players" (1728), not only defends the stage but uses the stage/world metaphor in so doing:

Why are harsh Statutes 'gainst poor Players made,
When Acting is the Universal Trade?
The World's but one wide Scene, our Life the Play
And ev'ry Man an Actor in his Way:
In which he, who can act his ill Part well,
Does him, who acts a good one ill, excell,
Since it is not so much his Praise, whose Part
Is best, but His; who acts it with most Art.
No matter what our Task, if well 'tis done;
But most Men act Parts which are least their own.²⁰

Wycherley again uses the metaphor in "A Collection of Maxims and Moral

Reflections" (also published as part of The Posthumous Works in 1728) shortly after explaining the nature of censorious men: "Every Man is a Player on the Stage of the World, and acts a different Part from his own natural Character, more to please the World, as more he cheats it" (LXXIX).²¹ In both of these references Wycherley focuses on the very same quality of "feigning" which Professor Hawkins emphasizes in connection with the use of the metaphor on the Elizabethan stage.²² In an age where the stage/world metaphor had supposedly faded from use, there it is.

A number of playwrights not directly attacked by Collier defended the stage, and their references to the stage/world metaphor support the view that it was a commonplace, functioning premise of those writing for the stage. In the dedication prefixed to The Twin Rivals, for example, George Farquhar says that just "as Prologues introduce Plays on the Stage, so Dedications usher them into the great Theatre of the World."²³ John Dennis uses the metaphor while questioning Collier's motives for opposing the stage in The Person of Quality's Answer to Mr. Collier's Letter, Being a Disswasive from the Play-House (1704):

His Motive perhaps may be human Policy, but it can never be Charity; or perhaps 'tis Spleen, or Covetousness, or Pride, or Arrogance, or Fear. I say Fear, Sir. For has not Mr. Collier Reason to apprehend the Stage as well as Hypocrites of the foremention'd Characters? For is it not evident, that at the same time that he is setting up for a First-Rate Reformer, he has shewn the World, that he is but a Fifth-Rate Comedian? And while he pretends to condemn Acting upon the Stage, is Acting a Part upon the Stage of the World so awkwardly and so ridiculously, that all who are furnish'd with common Sense have found it to be Comedy?²⁴

In stressing the importance of action in drama Dennis again finds the

metaphor appropriate: "The Drama is action itself, and it is action alone that is able to excite in any extraordinary manner the curiosity of mankind. What News is the Question now adays ev'ry moment, but people by that question demand what is done, and not what is said upon the Great Stage of the World."²⁵ Thomas Baker answers Collier and other critics of the stage by pointing out that

Plays were ever counted the Genuine History of the Age; and if their Opposers wou'd have innocent Entertainments, and leave Posterity Honourable Examples for Imitation and Instruction, 'tis but each amending himself; then not only the Little but this Great Theatre of Life, will be so Reform'd, and in a State more suitable to wish, than probable to hope. Nay, I appeal to the most Zealous and Severe, if they can charge one Play with any thing in Representation, which is not to be found in Life.²⁶

Elkanah Settle defines comedy as "the Representation of Humane Life in a lower class of Conversation; we visit the Palace for Tragedy, and range the Town for Comedy, viz. for the Follies, the Vices, the Vanities, and the Passions of Mankind, which we meet with every Day."²⁷ Charles Gildon speaks to all "Pseudo Critics" who, like Collier, would damn "the best of Dramatic Poets" for the wrong reasons. What these poets do well, and must continue to do despite the criticism, is form their ideas of drama "from experience and the study of Men."²⁸ Gildon still sees drama in terms of the stage/world metaphor some eighteen years later when he advocates plays as a diversion, for in them "you have an Image of Life, its Passions, and its Humours, that give us, whilst they divert us, most excellent Lessons, and such as glide gently into the Heart in the Vehicle of Pleasure."²⁹ Finally, George Granville begins his comedy, The Jew of Venice (1701), by having the

ghost of Dryden refer to the theatre audience as "This radiant Circle." To complete his use of the metaphor Granville closes with an epilogue aimed directly at the Collier controversy:

Each in his turn, the Poet and the Priest,
 Have view'd the Stage, but like false Prophets guess'd:
 The Man of Zeal in his Religious Rage
 Would silence Poets, and reduce the Stage.
 The Poet rashly, to get clear, retorts
 On Kings the Scandal, and bespatters Courts.³⁰
 Both err; for without mincing, to be plain,
 The Guilt is yours of every Odious Scene.
 The present time still gives the Stage its Mode,
 The Vices which you practice, we explode:
 We hold the Glass, and but reflect your Shame,
 Like Spartans, by exposing, to reclaim.
 The Scribler, pinch'd with Hunger, writes to Dine,
 And to your Genius must conform his Line;
 Not lewd by Choice, but meerly to submit;
 Would you encourage Sense, Sense would be writ.³¹

In the comments of stage defenders who were not primarily playwrights or who have remained anonymous there is also employment of the stage/world metaphor. The author of A Vindication of the Stage (1698), for example, tells Collier to "remember that Plays are the Glasses of Human Actions, and reflect the true Images of the People; as you see the errors of your Complexion by a view in a Glass, so in the Play-House you see the meanness and folly of your Vices, and by beholding the frightful Image, you grow asham'd, and perhaps may Reform."³² He expands on the usefulness of this microcosm when he explains that comedy "discovers to us the daily Affairs we meet with in the World . . . [and] shame[s] us out of our Follies":

Comedy is also useful to instruct in our Dealings in the World; when we see a Friend False and Treacherous, this teaches us to stand upon our Guard, and be very cautious whom we trust; when we see a Young Gentleman Ruin'd by the Subtile and Deluding Arts of some Cunning Courtezan, it bids us beware of the like Danger.³³

Similarly, the author of The Stage Acquitted (1699) points out how vices and the deceitfully vicious can be exposed, for "the Stage draws you the Picture to the life."³⁴ Indeed, the poet

hunts vice and folly through all their various forms,
chases them from all their covers, follows them through
all their doubles, to procure as much as possible,
and consistent with the depravity of our Natures,
the happiness of Mankind. It wou'd require a Volume
to instance in all the particulars, in which the
Poets are beneficial to the world in their Theatrical
Representations; where they present a glass, a mirrour
of Truth, to see their Deformities in, as well as
Beauty; they shew the world as it is, that you may
know how to direct your self in all states; for if
it were not drawn as it is, it could be of no use,
nor could any true measures of Conduct be taken from
it.³⁵

Heydeggar's Letter to the Bishop of London (1724) applies the image to masquerades rather than to plays:

The World, itself, excuse the Phrase, is
A Ball; where, mimick Shapes and Faces,
The Judgment of our Senses cheat,
And Fashion favours the Deceit:
Where from Fifteen to Sixty Three,
Fond of Dissembling, all agree.
In one continu'd Mummary.³⁶

James Drake, in perhaps the most complete critical response to A Short View, uses the metaphor a number of times, especially when defending the presentation of vicious or foolish characters on stage. With respect to persons of quality, for example, he says: "if Birth or Preferment be no sufficient Guard to a weakly Virtue or Understanding. If Title be no security against the usual Humane Informities; I see no reason, why they mayn't as well appear together upon the lesser Stage of the Theatre, as upon the grand one of the World."³⁷ He responds to Collier's accusation that the stage debauches society by using the metaphor and adding the mirror image to show how the stage reflects the world:

Mr. Collier observes abundance of Licentiousness and Impurity in the world, and is resolv'd to lay it all at the doors of the Theatres. He sees up and down a great number of figures like those that are expos'd upon the Stage, and he wisely concludes, that the Models must needs be taken from thence, and that these men are but the Players apes, which is directly contrary to the Truth. For these are the Originals, of which those upon the Stage are but the Copies, the Images, which that, like a Glass, reflects back upon 'em.³⁸

The stage/world metaphor is also obvious when Drake, again using the mirror image, examines the general function of drama:

For Dramatick Poetry, like a Glass, ought neither to flatter, nor to abuse in the Image which it reflects, but to give them their true colour and proportion, and is only valuable for being exact. If therefore any man dislikes the Figures, which he sees in it, he finds fault with Nature, not the Poet, if those Pictures be drawn according to the life; and he might as justly snarl at the wise Providence which governs the world, because he meets more ugly Faces than handsome ones, more Knaves and Fools than Honest and Wise men in it, and those too, generally more prosperous and fortunate.³⁹

The metaphor itself is even used by a number of critics who attacked the stage, though their views of the moral effect of the stage's imitation of the world were obviously quite different from the views of stage defenders.⁴⁰ Thus, Richard Burrige finds the stage no place to learn "Moral Precepts"; rather, here there is "no less than a Combination of all the Vices in the World."⁴¹ Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (Bishop of Meaux) sees the stage more specifically as an image of the world:

For it is the World with it's Poms, and Vanities, and wicked Charms, which our Plays represent and recommend to us. As therefore in the World, which is the Original, all things are full of Sensuality, and Curiosity, Ostentation, and Vanity and Pride; so in the Stage, which is the Copy, these things abound and reign. And the Effect of the Theatre must needs be to make us Fond of these things, because the only End it pursues is to promote Pleasures, and render the Representation of these things Entertaining and Delightful to us.⁴²

Quite obviously Bossuet does not see the stage as criticizing or ridiculing the vices of the world, but neither does he see the stage as the main cause of them as Collier does. Rather, he is aware of the traditional application of the stage/world metaphor, though he discounts any moral intention or effect of its use on the modern stage (the French stage of 1694). Ironically, another enemy of the stage uses the metaphor in presenting what he thinks is a poor reason for attending the theatre in A Letter to a Lady Concerning the New Play House (1706). The passage occurs when the anonymous author of this letter imagines that the "Lady" will ask,

What Harm is there, or can there be, in seeing those things acted upon the Stage, which, while we live in the World, and converse among Men, we can't but see acted every Day upon the great Stage or Theatre of the World? And there is certainly no more than this in seeing a Play; for we see nothing at the Playhouse, but what we see every Day in walking the Streets; A Play is but a Picture, which therefore we may certainly look upon as innocently as upon the thing which it is the Picture of; and while we disapprove the Action or thing Represented, we may be pleas'd with the Art and Skill of the Painter. And indeed after all the noise and clamour that has been of late Years rais'd against Plays, and all the Complaints that have been made of the Looseness and Immorality of the Stage, the worst Plays that have been acted . . . are but true Pictures and lively Representations of the things that are seen every Day and every where; and there's nothing worse ever to be seen within the Playhouse, than is to be seen without.⁴³

The writer's response to this defense of the stage emphasizes the ascetic duty of a good Christian to avoid sin and wickedness whenever possible, though it is sometimes impossible to avoid the "Swearing, Blasphemy, Prophaneness, and filthy Communication" of the world. But with plays there is a difference, for "it is our own Fault only if we choose to

see and hear such things when we may avoid it; and to go out of our way on purpose to see and hear such things."⁴⁴ But William Wycherley would have seen corrective purpose in choosing to see the world represented on stage, as he says in his posthumous poem, "To a Vain, Young Courtier":

Thus in the World, as on the Stage, we see
Men act, unlike themselves, in each Degree.
But Twixt the World and Stage, this Difference lies,
Play'rs to reform us wear a known Disguise;
We no such warrantable End can boast,
But still are Hypocrites at others' Cost.
To shame us from the Trade, the Cheats they play,
We, when we most pretend to serve, betray.
In Justice to ourselves, then, let's forbear.
To censure; and our Brother-Strolers spare.⁴⁵

Thus, moral implications of the stage/world metaphor much like those suggested by Thomas Heywood in his An Apology for Actors (1612) are repeated in Wycherley's defense of actors and the stage more than a century later. And the metaphor was not merely a figure of speech.

In discussing the ways Elizabethan dramatists used the stage/world metaphor in their plays, Professor Stroup presents chapters entitled "Encompassing Actions," "The Pageant of the World," "The Places of Action in Elizabethan Plays," and "The Characters: Orders and Degrees." Each of the chapters emphasizes that the Elizabethan stage reflected the cosmos by presenting a variety of actions (or plots), ritualistic pageants, places, and characters. He sees the actions as "spheres of action" which on stage center upon "the sphere of the individual, who is himself a microcosm" and move out to "the sphere of private affairs, the sphere of public affairs, the sphere of world affairs, and the sphere of spiritual affairs."⁴⁶ Though Professor Stroup feels this variety of correspondences in plots becomes severely limited with the later plays he treats, he uses Dryden--through Neander's comment

in An Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668)--to explain how "the scheme explains . . . the concentric spheres of the Ptolemaic system." It seems rather odd that a concept no longer useful to dramatists should be so well explained by one of the most important dramatists of the Restoration period. The explanation comes when English plots are compared to those of the French:

And this leads me to wonder why Lisideius and many others should cry up the barrenness of the French plots above the variety and copiousness of the English. Their plots are single; . . . ours, besides the main design, have under-plots or by-concernments of less considerable persons and intrigues, which are carried on with the motion of the main plot; just as they say the orb of the fixed stars, and those of the planets, though they have motions of their own, are whirled about by the motion of the primum mobile, in which they are contained. That similitude expresses much of the English state; for if contrary motions may be found in nature to agree, if a planet can go east and west at the same time, one way by virtue of his own motion, the other by the force of the First Mover, it will not be difficult to imagine how the under-plot, which is only different, not contrary to the great design, may naturally be conducted along with it.⁴⁷

Dryden's words suggest his understanding of the playwright's function in the "great design" of the play as compared to the function of the Divine Dramatist, the "First Mover," in the design and operation of the universe.⁴⁸

In addition to various "encompassing actions," Professor Stroup emphasizes the importance of variety in places and characters if the stage is to reflect the world. He feels that by changing scenes within the plays, by using various historical periods and settings for the plays, and by attempting "in each play to suggest the orders and degrees of mankind, the whole of the social order, reaching from crown

to clown, from highest to lowliest servant," the Elizabethan playwrights were patterning their plays after their view of the world in order to entertain and instruct their audiences.⁴⁹ As further evidence that the Restoration playwrights used the stage/world metaphor in patterning their plays, the participants in the Collier controversy seem very conscious of this tradition in English drama and espouse this necessity for variety in their critical comments. Thus Dryden speaks of the poet's job of constructing a play from history in his preface to An Evening's Love (1671): "and, since no story can afford characters enough for the variety of the English stage, it follows that it is to be altered and enlarged with new persons, accidents, and designs, which will almost make it new."⁵⁰ He criticizes Davenant's heroic play, The Seige of Rhodes, for lacking "the fulness of a plot, and the variety of characters to form it as it ought."⁵¹

Others involved in the stage controversy show a similar attitude toward variety in the plays. Elkanah Settle, for example, in A Farther Defence of Dramatick Poetry (1698), argues that

the Subjects of our English Tragedies are generally the whole Revolutions of Governments, States or Families, or those great Transactions; [and] that our Genius of Stage-poetry can no more reach the Heights that can please our Audience, under his [Corneille's] Unity Shackles, then an Eagle can soar in a Hen-coop. . . . the French can content themselves with the sweets of a single Rose-bed; and nothing less then the whole Garden, and the Field round it, will satisfie the English.⁵²

In addition to the need for this variety in types of and sources for English tragedy, Settle believes that "Here our Audience[s] expect a little Variety, viz. some change of Scene."⁵³ He feels, like Dryden,

that there "must be Under-plots, and considerable ones too, possibly big enough to jostle the Upper-plot, to support a good English Play."⁵⁴ Likewise, George Farquhar explains the intention of an English play in A Discourse upon Comedy (1702), by pointing out the variety represented in the audience:⁵⁵

An English Play is intended for the Use and Instruction of an English Audience, a People not only separated from the rest of the World by Situation, but different also from other Nations as well in the Complexion and Temperament of the Natural Body, as in the Constitution of our Body Politick: As we are a Mixture of many Nations, so we have the most unaccountable Medley of Humours among us of any People upon Earth; these Humours produce Variety of Follies, some of 'um unknown to former Ages; these new Distempers must have new Remedies, which are nothing but new Counsels and Instructions.⁵⁶

Thus, he feels the particular variety of the English audience requires a purpose (Utile) for the English dramatist different from that for any other dramatist, ancient or modern. To achieve this purpose, Farquhar suggests what means (Dulce) the playwright must employ:

Then what sort of a Dulce, (which I take for the Pleasantry of the Tale; or the Plot of the Play) must a Man make use of to engage the Attention of so many different Humours and Inclinations: Will a single Plot satisfie every body? . . . To make the Moral Instructive, you must make the Story diverting; the Spleenatick Wit, the Beau Courtier, the heavy Citizen, the fine Lady, and her fine Footman, come all to be instructed, and therefore must all be diverted.⁵⁷

He goes on to say that the English playwright of 1702 must look to the plays of "Shakespear, Johnson, Fletcher," and other English playwrights for models. Quite clearly his own attitudes about variety of representation seem to be derived from the Elizabethan view of the stage as a microcosm.

Thomas D'Urfey makes brief reference to the same necessity for variety of plot when he says that a play presents "a Story not only intricate and difficult to be contriv'd, but divertive and full of Variety."⁵⁸ James Drake focuses thus on the range of characters to be presented in a play:

The Characters therefore must neither be too general, nor too singular, one loses the distinction, the other makes it monstrous, we are too familiar with that to take notice of it, and too unacquainted with this to acknowledge it to be real. But betwixt these there is an almost infinite variety; some natural and approaching to Generals, as the several Ages of the World, and of Life, Sexes and Tempers; some Artificial, and more particular, as the vast Varieties and Shapes of Villany, Knavery, Folly, Affectation and Humour, &c. All these are within the Poet's Royalty, and he may summon 'em to attend him, whenever he has occasion for their service. Yet tho these make up perhaps the greatest part of Mankind, he is not fondly to imagine, that he has any Authority over the whole, or to expect homage from any of 'em, as the Publick Representatives of their Sex.⁵⁹

Finally, John Dennis sets about to show how modern comedy pleases and instructs more than ancient comedy by saying that both of these ends can best be achieved through the Ridiculum (that which is laughable). He points out that in modern comedy more pleasure is afforded the audience because

there is a greater Variety of it [Ridiculum] in the Incidents, and in the Characters, and that Variety must make it the more delightful. For a Uniformity in this Case takes away from the Surprise, and without Surprise the Ridiculum cannot subsist. And besides, that the Moderns have a greater Variety both of Characters and Fables, they have a greater Variety of Style. . . . [For example] look into the Plain-Dealer, and you shall find as many Styles in it, as there are Characters. For Manly, Freeman, Plausible, Olivia, Novel, Elisha, the Widow Blackacre and Jerry, have

each of them a different Dialect, which, besides the Variety, must be farther delightful, because 'tis an exact Imitation of Nature.

Dennis here links the importance of variety in events and characters to the accurate representation of the world on the stage. He reemphasizes the need for variety when he states that comedy instructs not only through its characters, "but if it instructs [also] by its Fable and Action, as certainly it ought to do, why then the Ridiculum must be in the Incidents which are parts of the Action . . . chiefly in the Catastrophe, which ought to be the most instructive Part of the Fable, and to make the strongest Impresion."⁶⁰ Thus, he can conclude, with respect to the Ridiculum, that "the Moderns having greater Variety of it, both in their Persons and Action, the Instruction in the Modern Comedy must be the more extensive, besides, that the Variety of Action and Incidents must make our Catastrophes more surprizing, and consequently more ridiculous."⁶¹

To represent effectively the world on the stage the playwright had to concern himself not only with the variety of actions, scenes, and characters but with what Professor Stroup refers to as "the world's pageant." He shows how the tradition of pageantry in English life and thought was reflected on stage throughout the development of English drama (at least until 1642).⁶² He indicates that the "devices and materials" which the playwrights used to represent this pageantry "consist of formal entrances and exits, various types of processions or formal movements of characters, often military in design, and of ceremonies of ceremonious actions, or ritual."⁶³ These aspects of "cosmic pageant" were "basic to the chronicle and history plays--and to the high

tragedies as well. They are a little less obvious in romantic and tragi-comedy and still less in domestic tragedy and comedy, though seldom entirely absent."⁶⁴ I would argue that this tradition of representing the pageantry of the world (as represented in English life) on stage did not end in 1642. Indeed, the importance of many of the ceremonies probably gained renewed meaning with the restoration of a king in 1660, thus making their representation on stage even more significant. The plays performed during the period reveal that the pageant of the world was expressed not only in the many revivals and adaptations of Elizabethan and ancient plays but also in the heroic drama, the tragedies, the operatic plays (including adaptations from Shakespeare), and many of the comedies. Dryden, in fact, emphasizes the necessity for using military pageantry on stage in Of Heroic Plays: An Essay (1672):

To those who object [to] my frequent use of drums and trumpets, and my representations of battles, I answer, I introduced them not on the English stage. Shakespeare used them frequently; and though Jonson shows no battle in his Catiline, yet you hear from behind the scenes the sounding of trumpets, and the shouts of fighting armies. But I add farther: that these warlike instruments, and even the representations of fighting on the stage, are no more than necessary to produce the effects of an heroic play; that is, to raise the imagination of the audience, and to persuade them, for the time, that what they behold on [in?] the theatre is really performed.⁶⁵

Dryden certainly seems to wish his audience to see the correspondence between the sweeping actions on stage and those in the world.

But it is perhaps most difficult to see how "the pageant of the world" is expressed in the comedies of the Restoration which have been analyzed mainly for their "wit" or "manner" by modern critics.

Though many devices of pageantry should not be expected in these comedies, since their English antecedents had fewer devices than the serious drama, one which stands out is the institution of marriage. The plays are not so much occupied with the ceremony of the wedding as with the rituals of courtship and betrothal in preparation for the marriage.⁶⁶ In objection to those critics who have found the playwrights' treatment of marriage "cynical" in Restoration drama, P. F. Vernon suggests that the dramatists attacked those "grotesque, 'unnatural' unions" which are no more than "matrimonial bargains." This typical marriage of convenience, which is usually arranged by parents or "mercenary relatives,"

is attacked as a discredited commercial contract which yoked together, without regard for human feelings, young and old, intelligent and stupid, sensitive ladies and miserly businessmen; all unions without affection, whose only possible fruits were mutual distrust, possessive tyranny, jealousy and contempt. There seems no doubt that, with rare exceptions, the dramatists expected their audience to recognise in the disastrous marriages, which they held up to ridicule, the contemporary marriage of convenience.⁶⁷

As Professor Vernon points out, these marriages of convenience were "the norm in real life," but the dramatists almost without fail present them as something disgusting, to be rejected by any person concerned with future harmony and happiness. In opposition to these marriages, where cuckolding is the rule, are those marriages (usually of the protagonists) which conclude or are suggested at the conclusion of so many Restoration comedies and which have the expressed love and honest understanding of both partners as their bases.⁶⁸ But modern critics have consistently failed to see this; instead, they seem inclined toward Collier's opinion that "The Stage Poets make Libertines their Top Characters, and give them

Success in their Debauchery."⁶⁹ Collier explains what he means by citing various libertine-heroes and delineating their characters. Of Congreve's Valentine in Love for Love he says:

"Tis true, He was hearty in his Affection to Angelica.
Now without question, to be in Love with a fine Lady
of 30000 Pounds is a great Virtue! But then abating
this single Commendation, Valentine is altogether
compounded of Vice. He is a prodigal Debauchee,
unnatural, and Profane, Obscene, Sawcy, and undutiful."⁷⁰

What Collier (and anyone who agrees with his reading) fails to recognize is that Valentine, like many heroes in Restoration comedy, changes from a "prodigal Debauchee" who is "unnatural" to a plain-dealing lover, desiring the natural state of a marriage based upon honesty and selfless love.⁷¹ Professor Vernon explains this attitude about marriage in most Restoration comedies:

Usually the dramatists try to demonstrate that the promiscuity of the libertine cannot be successful as a way of living because it is 'unnatural'. The libertine cannot live happily by his philosophy because it fails to take into account the 'natural' desire of human kind for a permanent emotional relationship with a member of the opposite sex based on more than mere lust. In practice the rake discovers that all his cynical theories can do nothing to stop him falling in love.⁷²

This ritual of betrothal on stage was important because it reflected its equally important ritual counterpart in the world. As an aspect of the pageant of life, marriage was one of the key moments in determining the happiness of man, and that happiness was a direct result of the motives which were exposed during courtship and betrothal.⁷³ As Thomas Brown observes in Amusement VII, "Marriage," in his Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London (1700), those who approached marriage only for the divertisement of the "ceremony" of

courtship, or who went to matchmakers who had "an admirable talent for matching conditions, families, trades and estates; in short every thing, except humours and inclinations." would find no happiness. He does think "'tis possible for those that marry to be happy," but only if marriage is properly defined:

you must call it trucking or bartering, and not marrying, to take a woman merely for her fortune, and reckon her perfections by the number of pounds she is like to bring with her. Nor is it to marry but to please one's self, to choose a wife as we do a tulip, merely for her beauty. It is not to marry, but to dote at a certain age, to take a young woman only for the sake of her company. What is it then to be married? Why, 'tis to choose with circumspection and deliberation, by inclination, and not by interest, such a woman as will choose you after the same manner.⁷⁴

Such observations of marriage come from Brown's observations of the "world" of London life; the very same observations of good and bad marital motives are presented on the Restoration stage as entertainment and moral instruction. Thus, pageantry, even as it is modified in the comedies, is joined with the continued sense of the need for variety to become central considerations in the drama's depiction of the world. It only remains to show the importance of poetic justice in reinforcing the moral intentions of the Restoration dramatists in reflecting the larger stage productions of the Divine Dramatist.

In discussing the relationship of the Elizabethan stage to the world, Professor Stroup suggests that the dramatists consciously used what he calls "a testing pattern" to structure their plays. He maintains that this pattern

involves the trial or proving of a man. The play often takes something of its shape from the testing

force of Providence operating within the characters of men, whether the characters ride Fortune's wheel, are frustrated by a flaw, or achieve by maturation of mind recognition and then accept their suffering. As the protagonist moves in pageant and encompassing actions across the stage of the world he is proved, like Job or Jonah, and in his proving he undergoes a testing. Often, and in the tragedies especially, this proving follows the pretty well-recognized pattern of Christian tests. Divine Providence does not appear in proper person, though in tragedy it often sends ghostly agents to direct or provide the conflict. But it may, and especially so in comedy, send a vicar in the guise of the king or duke or simply the judge who settles the conflict and metes out justice, rewards, and punishments, in the last scene.⁷⁵

In the plays which observe this pattern, then, "God is director of the play and final arbiter at the denouement." Tragedies may show a protagonist passing his test, and thus saved; while comedies may show a protagonist (or others) punished for failing; what will be obvious is a kind of Providential justice which may not have been an exact reflection of the real world, but which most people believed to be a condition of the hereafter. The importance of the concept of Divine Providence in the lives of the people and in the literature cannot be overstated. As Professor Henry Hitch Adams points out, "One of the notions most useful to pamphleteers, writers of homiletic treatises, and playwrights was that Divine Providence intervened in the lives of men to assure the operations of divine justice." In focusing on the applications of Providential justice in tragedy, Professor Adams sees the dramatist using

interventions of Divine Providence to show direct operations of what he understands as the will of God. When he dispenses poetic justice, a playwright acts as a god in a microcosm of his own creation. When he employs operations of Divine Providence, a playwright gives his interpretation of the will of God. In both the dramatic and nondramatic

literature of the time, Divine Providence is employed to punish vice, to prevent crime against an innocent person, and to reveal criminals to the agencies of human justice.⁷⁶

Though Professors Stroup and Adams trace the concept of Providential justice in patterning plays only to the closing of the theatres in 1642, it was still very important in the drama after the restoration of Charles II, as may be seen in the remarks of the playwrights and critics involved in the Collier controversy. From these remarks it seems obvious that what prevailed in the best drama was the Christian world-view of a God-centered, contingent universe. The stage still functioned as a place where the poet consciously used poetic justice in the actions of his characters to suggest the Providential justice imposed by the Divine Dramatist in the larger worlds of life and afterlife. Professor Williams has indicated the importance of "poetical justice" and "the contrivances of Providence" in the works of William Congreve,⁷⁷ and he has suggested the pervasiveness of the "testing pattern" in other Restoration and eighteenth-century drama.⁷⁸ Professor Schneider, in his study of Restoration comedies, observes that well over half of the comedies he considers exhibit a testing pattern (employed by the heroines) which shows "how much the man will sacrifice for love."⁷⁹ He also emphasizes the importance of poetical justice in structuring these plays in order to "tell us what we ought to be" as well as what we are.⁸⁰ That this reflection of Providential justice would have been expected and understood by viewers and readers of the drama seems assured from the common occurrence of the concept (especially in connection with the stage/world metaphor) in contemporary sermons and apologetics as

well as the drama.⁸¹ The relationship is seen clearly by the critic who apparently coined the term "poetic justice," Thomas Rymer, in a statement about Sophocles and Euripides:

finding in History, the same end happen to the righteous and to the unjust, vertue often opprest, and wickedness on the Throne: they saw these particular yesterday-truths were imperfect and improper to illustrate the universal and eternal truths by them intended. Finding also that this unequal distribution of rewards and punishments did perplex the wisest, and by the Atheist was made a scandal to the Divine Providence. They concluded, that a Poet must of necessity see justice exactly administered, if he intended to please.⁸²

He later goes on to point out that the audience may be affected by a tragedy "by observing that constant order, that harmony and beauty of Providence, that necessary relation and chain, whereby the causes and effects, the vertues and rewards, the vices and their punishments are proportion'd and link'd together; how deep and dark soever are laid the Springs, and however intricate and involv'd are their operations."⁸³

Though Collier seems to recognize the value of employing poetic justice--for he cites Jonson and Rapin in support of it and even mentions Falstaff as an example of Shakespeare's use of it⁸⁴--it is his position that the "Malefactors are cherished and rewarded by the Modern Stage," that the contemporary "Stage Poets make their Principal Persons Vitious, and reward them at the End of the Play."⁸⁵ He selects numerous examples where he finds a perversion of poetic justice, most of them in the plays of Dryden.⁸⁶ Dryden, however, seems to agree with Rymer about the nature of and necessity for poetic justice, while seeing it as a tradition best employed in English drama: "the punishment of vice and reward of virtue are the most adequate ends of tragedy, because most

conducting to good example of life. Now pity is not so easily raised for a criminal . . . as it is for an innocent man, and the suffering of innocence and punishment of the offender is of the nature of English tragedy."⁸⁷ He also provides a more exact explanation of how poetic justice may be shown in tragedy, for part of its function

is to reform manners by delightful representation of human life in great persons, by way of dialogue. If this be true, then not only pity and terror are to be moved as the only means to bring us to virtue, but generally love to virtue and hatred to vice; by shewing the rewards of one, and punishments of the other; at least by rendering virtue always amiable, though it be shown unfortunate; and vice detestable, tho' it be shown triumphant.⁸⁸

Specifically, he defends the "poetical justice" meted out in Don Sebastian (1690),⁸⁹ as well as in his comedy An Evening's Love: or the Mock Astrologer (1671). As if anticipating Collier's attack (though not his deliberate omissions), he says that in comedy neither he nor "better poets" attempt to show "libertinism amiable": "we make not vicious persons happy, but only as Heaven makes sinners so; that is, by reclaiming them first from vice. For so 'tis supposed they are, when they resolve to marry; for then enjoying what they desire in one, they cease to pursue the love of many."⁹⁰

Congreve also defends the poetic justice he has observed in constructing The Mourning Bride, when he answers Collier:

The Reader has seen his Charge against the Mourning Bride, and is a Judge of the Justness and Strength of it. I confess I have not much to say in Commendation of any thing that I have Written: But if a fair-dealing-man, or a candid Critick, and examin'd that Tragedy, I fancy that neither the general Moral contain'd in the two Last Lines; nor the several particular Morals interwoven with the success of every principal Character, would have been overseen by him.

The Reward of Matrimonial Constancy in Almeria, of the same Virtue, together with filial Piety and Love to his Country in Osmin; the Punishment of Tyranny in Manuel, of Ambition in Gonzalez, of violent Passions, and unlawful Love in Zara: These it may be were Parts of the Poem as worthy to be observed, as one or two erroneous Expressions; and admit they were such, might in some measure have aton'd for them.⁹¹

Vanbrugh likewise indicates his moral intentions in The Relapse by assuring Collier that Young Fashion is not the "Author's Favourite"; indeed, the mercenary marriage which Collier sees as a reward for Young Fashion, Vanbrugh seems to view as just punishment, for "he has help'd him to a Wife, who's likely to make his Heart ake: But I suppose Mr. Collier is of Opinion, that Gold can never be bought too dear."⁹² But Vanbrugh's major defense comes in his explanation of what Professor Stroup refers to as "the testing pattern" of the play. He first explains how his plan was to move the reformed Loveless from the relative safety of "Solitude and Retirement" to the many dangers of the town. Thus, Loveless's fall is something he "design'd for a natural Instance of the frailty of Mankind, even in his most fixt Determinations; and for a mark upon the defect of the most steady Resolve, without that necessary Guard, of keeping out of Temptation."⁹³ In addition, he says he has imposed the same test upon Amanda, whose virtue not only triumphs over the lustful intentions of Worthy, but produces a conversion in him, which is characterized by peace, order and a love and respect for virtue.⁹⁴ As Vanbrugh observes, Collier discounts any importance in this conclusion, but it is quite clearly the result of a moral pattern which Stroup sees as central in English drama from its beginnings.

Vanbrugh's position is reenforced by Elkanah Settle, one of

the other playwrights who responded to Collier. He first takes up the issue of the distribution of justice in the Lord Foppington-Young Fashion plot of The Relapse and points out that Young Fashion goes far in testing his brother's "Reason, Justice or Pity" before resorting to Coupler's plan. He also suggests that Lord Foppington's pride and vanity as well as his

unnatural Inhumanity to his own Brother, and all the other Vices of his Character, ought to be punish'd, with all the Insults, Defeats, Disappointments and Shame, that the Dramatick Justice can heap upon him, through the whole Play. But as no over-reach or defeat in Comedy can well be performed, but by some Fraud or Cheat or other; and consequently he that carries on the Cheat cannot reach to the full heights of a perfect Character, viz. wholly unblemish'd; however 'tis the work of the Poet in that Case to raise those just Provocations for every such Insult, and lay that reasonable Ground for every such Cheat, especially in the prosperous Characters of the Comedy; that their Successes, in the Catastrophe of the Play, may seem the Reward of some Virtue and Justice even in the Cheat himself, comparative to the Vice and Injustice they punish."⁹⁵

But Settle does not stop with "Young Fashion's supplanting his Brothers pretensions"; he feels there is "another piece of Poetick Justice in carrying off the Young Heiress:"

For when the Young Hoyden is thus snared into Wedlock, not by any ignoble rascally Imposter, but a Young Gentleman, at least of equal birth and Quality with her; the other part of the Delusion, viz. his being a Younger Brother, and a Man of no Estate, seems but an honest Dramatick over-reach, impos'd upon so sordid and avaricious a Character, so over-cautious a Coxcomb as her Father Sir Tunbelly: Nor is the Young Lady herself, under the meanness of her rustick Education, so Exalted a Character; but that Young Fashion may fairly and innocently carry the Prize, without one murmuring Word, or envying Eye from the severest Critick in the whole Audience.⁹⁶

Indeed, Settle might have gone so far as Vanbrugh in suggesting the

potential problems Hoyden poses for Young Fashion: this "reward" of marriage may produce horns instead of happiness when this country wife's desires begin to encounter other men. Settle does, however, explain how well poetic justice functions in this less important and more comic plot of the play. When he brings up the Amanda-Loveless plot, he finds the same kind of testing pattern which Vanbrugh sees as crucial to moral instruction:

Virtue cannot very well be wrought up to any Dramatick Perfection, nor sparkle with any considerable Brightness and Beauties, unless it stands a Temptation, and surmounts it. We have a Proverbial Saying, that will hardly allow that Woman to be truly chaste, that has never been try'd. This I am sure, the noblest Triumphs of Virtue are made by the Assaults it can resist and conquer [The poet's] Characters of Virtue must come forth into the gay World, with Levity, Vanity, nay Temptation itself, all round them. They must go to the Court, the Ball, the Masque, the Musick-Houses, the Dancing-Schools, nay to the very Prophane Play-Houses themselves, (to speak in Mr. Collier's Dialect;) and yet come off unconquer'd. These are the Virtues that, to be Instructive to an Audience, are what should tread the Stage.⁹⁷

Thus just rewards can only come after a character has been tested, and the testing on stage is patterned after the same testing which man undergoes in the world.

In his response to A Short View, Charles Gildon shows how concerned he is with the audience's impression of Providence as defined by the poet's employment of poetic justice on stage:

No unfortunate Character ought to be introduc'd on the Stage, without its Humane Frailties to justifie its Misfortunes: For unfortunate Perfection, is the Crime of Providence, and to offer at that, is an Impiety a Poet ought never to be guilty of; being directly opposite to his duty of Rewarding the Innocent, and punishing the Guilty; and by that means, to establish a just notion of Providence in its most important Action, the Government of Mankind.⁹⁸

Gildon's understanding of poetic justice is further amplified in The Complete Art of Poetry (1718), where he supports Dennis in his Spectator arguments with Addison; Gildon quotes Dennis's views with apparently complete agreement.⁹⁹ Those views, which Dennis also presents when responding to Collier in The Usefulness of the Stage (1698), express clearly the artistic and moral motives of the artist in using poetic justice on stage to mirror the Providential justice at work on the larger stage of life. Thus, after stating that "1. The Being of a God. 2. Providence. 3. Immortality of the Soul. 4. Future Rewards and Punishments" are, for the poet "and particularly the Tragick Poet," the "very Foundations of his Art," Dennis says:

Poetick Justice would be a Jest if it were not an Image of the Divine, and if it did not consequently suppose the Being of a God and Providence. It supposes too the Immortality of the Soul, and future Rewards and Punishments Now this supposition of a future State, is very just and reasonable. For since Passions in their Excesses are the Causes of most of the Disturbances that happen in the World, upon a Supposition of a future State, nothing can be more just, than that the Power which governs the World, should make sometimes very severe Examples of those who indulge their Passions; Providence seems to require this. But then to make involuntary Faults capital, and to punish them with the last Punishment, would not be so consistent with the Goodness of God, unless there were a Compensation hereafter. For such a Punishment would not only be too rigorous, but cruel and extravagant.¹⁰⁰

But Dennis recognizes some difficulties in the dramatist's use of poetic justice, for though the "Poet is himself the Creator" of "dramatical Persons," the justice he dispenses on stage is not an exact "Representation of the Justice of the Almighty." For in the world if there is "not always an equal Distribution of Affliction and Happiness," man,

being immortal, "will find a Compensation in Futurity for any seeming Inequity in his Destiny here. But the Creatures of a Poetical Creator are imaginary and transitory; they have no longer Duration than the Representation of their respective Fables; and consequently, if they offend, they must be punish'd during that Representation."¹⁰¹ In drawing all of these considerations together, then, Dennis states what he conceives to be the "Duty of every Tragick Poet":

[that is,] by an exact Distribution of a Poetical Justice, to imitate the Divine Dispensation, and to inculcate a particular Providence. 'Tis true indeed upon the Stage of the World the Wicked sometimes prosper, and the Guiltless suffer. But that is permitted by the Governour of the World, to shew from the Attribute of his infinite Justice that there is a Compensation in Futurity, to prove the Immortality of the Human Soul, and the Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments. But the Poetical Persons in Tragedy exist no longer than the Reading or the Representation; the whole Extent of their Entity is circumscribed by those; and therefore during that Reading or Representation, according to their Merits or Demerits, they must be punish'd or rewarded. If this is not done, there is no impartial Distribution of Poetical Justice, no instructive Lecture of a particular Providence, and no Imitation of the Divine Dispensation.¹⁰²

It is difficult to imagine a clearer statement of the moral function of poetic justice in the dramatist's view of the stage as a "little world."

Other voices raised in defense of the stage also asserted the importance of poetic justice in the drama. The anonymous author of The Stage Acquitted (1699), for example, recognizes that "it has been already by divers Authors made appear, that as the end of the Drama is the Correction, punishment of Vice, and reward of Virtue, the purgation of our passions, &c. . . . there is no better human way to that end." He later goes on to defend Charles I for allowing drama on Sunday on the

grounds that it "tended to the confirmation of the Doctrine of the day" in part because of "the lively examples represented before our Eyes, of Vice punished and Virtues rewarded."¹⁰³ John Oldmixon states that true justice can only be impressed upon an audience by showing what actions and beliefs bring about the rewards and punishments provided by the playwright.¹⁰⁴ He also defends the justice employed in two plays Collier attacked: Dryden's Don Sebastian and Congreve's The Mourning Bride.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, another anonymous spokesman for the stage defends Vanbrugh's use of poetic justice in The Provok'd Wife against Collier's assertion "that Sir John Brute is not punish'd enough. Truly, I think, his whole character is one of continual Punishment; and I wou'd no more chuse Sir John's Circumstances for the pleasure of his Libertinism, than I wou'd Mr. Collier's for the pleasure of Lashing on't."¹⁰⁶

Finally, Dr. James Drake joins the list of contemporaries who found poetical justice essential in the moral design of the plays by linking the concept to the fable or plot. His view, shared by others in the controversy,¹⁰⁷ directly contradicts Professor Eric Rothstein's feeling that there is a "depreciation of the plot" as a major concern in Restoration tragedy.¹⁰⁸ Drake says:

The Parts therefore of a Play, in which the Morals of the Play appear, are the Fable, the Characters, and the Discourse. Of these the Fable (in Tragedy especially) is the most considerable, being (according to Aristotle) the Primum Mobile by which all the other parts are acted and govern'd, and the principal Instrument by which the Passions are weeded and purg'd, by laying before the Eyes of the Spectators examples of the miserable Catastrophe of Tyranny, Usurpation, Pride, Cruelty, and Ambition, &c. and to crown suffering Virtue with Success and Reward, or to punish the unjust Oppressors of it with Ruine and Destruction.¹⁰⁹

Drake then evaluates a number of plays by examining how poetic justice works to convey a moral understanding. He sees Sophocles' Oedipus as instructive in the ways of God, for viewers will see "that the Will of Heaven is not to be disputed by Mortals, how severe soever, even to Injustice, the Conditions of it may seem to us; and that whoever sets up his own Wisdom in opposition to it, shall in that Presumption meet both his Crime and his Punishment." He later defends the moral of the fable in Hamlet by saying that "nothing in Antiquity can rival this Plot for the admirable distribution of Poetick Justice." That moral for him is "That the Greatness of the Offender does not qualify the Offense, and that no Humane Power, or Policy are a sufficient Guard against the Impartial Hand, and Eye of Providence, which defeats their wicked purposes, and turns their dangerous Machinations upon their own heads." Drake singles out King Lear, Timon of Athens, and Macbeth as among other tragedies by Shakespeare which "are Moral and Instructive" before moving on to defend Otway's The Orphan from Collier's abuse. He then describes how Dryden's Don Sebastian presents "a very Religious Moral, and consonant to the Tenour of the 2d Commandment shews, that the Punishment of Mens crimes, shall extend not only to their own persons, but if unrepented shall reach their Posterity likewise." As for Congreve's The Mourning Bride he has special praise, for "the Fable of this Play is one of the most just, and regular that the Stage, either Antient or Modern, can boast of. I mean, for the distribution of Rewards, and Punishments. For no virtuous person misses his Recompence, and no vitious one escapes Vengeance." Even in comedy, which he feels does not require the strict observance of poetic justice, he finds the contemporary dramatists have

generally taken those characters of wit and sense from a debauched condition "to a solemn Resolution of Reforming at last." And in any case, whatever success this character achieves in comedy, it is not due to his imperfection or "Licentiousness, but to the Wit and Sense, or other good Qualities, which are predominant in the Character."¹¹⁰

Clearly, then, the critics and playwrights who defended the stage in the Collier controversy saw the Restoration stage as a "little world" upon which the dramas of man were represented to entertain and instruct. For them, the features of variety, pageantry, and Providential testing and justice, so important in Elizabethan drama, were still recognized as parts of those moral designs which Jeremy Collier could see only as patterns for vice.

Hopefully what has emerged from this discussion of the Collier controversy is a better critical basis for understanding the drama of the Restoration period. It should be clear that those critics who defended the stage recognised that there were abuses, but they also saw therein a moral value which they maintained was an essential part of its artistic value. Thus, unlike many modern critics who have rejected Collier and with him any consideration of morality, they answered Collier on grounds that were at once moral and artistic. In explaining how the stage functioned, they felt that the representation of "evil" on the stage (in the actions and speeches of characters) was not only proper but necessary if the audience was to know and admire "good." Rather than seeing the dangers of imitation as Collier did in his Platonic reaction to evil,

they felt the plays offered just choices for all whose understanding and judgment were not depraved. In addition, they exposed Collier's gross errors in reading and argument, while consistently asserting the value of the plays he attacked. Enough evidence is obvious in the criticism of the controversy to assume that the dramatists consciously patterned their plays to represent a world where man is tested in much as he is tested under the eye and judgment of the Divine Dramatist.

NOTES

¹Theatre of the World (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), p. 164. With an emphasis on the architectural sources of Elizabethan theatres, Professor Yates says that "abroad, churches and cathedrals were being built to express the religious spirit in neoclassical architecture. In England perhaps only the public theatre was able to share to some extent in this movement and to anticipate the English neoclassical church architecture of the future" (p. 168).

²Ibid., p. 168. Also see Thomas B. Stroup, Microcosmos: The Shape of the Elizabethan Play (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), pp. 34-35 & 46.

³Stroup, p. 5.

⁴Ibid., pp. 8-16.

⁵Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), p. 83.

⁶Ibid., p. 84.

⁷"'All the World's a Stage' Some Illustrations of the Theatrum Mundi," Shakespeare Quarterly, 17(1966), 174-175.

⁸Stroup, pp. 41 & 21.

⁹"Poetical Justice, the Contrivances of Providence, and the Works of William Congreve," ELH, 35(1968), 550. Also, see the following articles by Williams: "The 'Utmost Tryal' of Virtue and Congreve's Love for Love," Tennessee Studies in Literature, 17(1972), 4-5 and "The 'Just Decrees of Heav'n' and Congreve's Mourning Bride," in Congreve Consider'd: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar, December 5, 1970 (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1971), pp. 5-8.

¹⁰Williams, "Poetical Justice," 551-554.

¹¹A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (London, 1698), pp. 148-149.

¹²"Of Dramatic Poesy" and other Critical Essays, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1962), I, 146.

¹³Ibid., I, 2.

¹⁴The Campaigners: or the Pleasant Adventures at Brussels (London, 1698), preface, p. 8.

¹⁵The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, eds. Bonamy Dobrée and Geoffrey Webb (Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1927), I, 206.

¹⁶Ibid., 113.

¹⁷A Short View, p. 12.

¹⁸The Complete Works of William Congreve, ed. Montague Summers (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1923), III, 175. Congreve continually defends an accurate depiction of characters on stage, telling Collier that "when Men neither sneak, nor prevaricate, nor do any thing unbecoming their Office in the World, they ought not to be expos'd at all in Comedy; for the Characters expos'd there, should be of those only, who misbehave themselves" (III, 197).

¹⁹Ibid., II, 193.

²⁰The Complete Works of William Wycherley, ed. Montague Summers (Soho: The Nonesuch Press, 1924), IV, 241.

²¹Ibid., 117.

²²See n. 7 above.

²³The Complete Works of George Farquhar, ed. Charles Stonehill (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1930), I, 285.

²⁴The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, I (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1939), 313-314.

²⁵Ibid., 280.

²⁶An Act at Oxford (London, 1704), epistle dedicatory.

²⁷A Defence of Dramatick Poetry (London, 1698), p. 80.

²⁸Love's Victim: or, the Queen of Wales (London, 1701), preface.

²⁹The Post-Man Robb'd of His Mail (London, 1719), p. 216.

³⁰He may be thinking of Dryden specifically here, since The Pilgrim (1700) had recently been published, and the epilogue, in part, says of Collier that

He tells you, that this very moral age
Received the first infection from the stage;
But sure, a banished court, with lewdness fraught,
The sees of open vice, returning, brought.
Thus lodged (as vice by great example thrives),
It first debauched the daughters and the wives.
London, a fruitful soil, yet never bore
So plentiful a Crop of horns before.

.

Thus did the thriving malady prevail;
The court its head, the poets but the tail. (The Works
of John Dryden, eds., Sir Walter Scott
and George Saintsbury, VIII (Edinburgh:
William Paterson, 1884), 502.)

³¹I have reversed the italicized and unitalicized words.

³²p. 15.

³³Ibid., p. 26.

³⁴p. 77.

³⁵Ibid., p. 81. This author later explains how the microcosm of the stage can be edifying to the spectators, for "The Stage sets before their Eyes what Folly and Falsehood are, not in bare terms, which want a comment, but in so plain and visible a dress, that you know them off the Stage when you meet them every day in your Conversation, or in your Negotiations, in your own inclinations or practice; so that after the Spectator or Hearer has been shown the lively draught of Folly and Falsehood on the Stage, he must know it where-ever he meets it, and avoid it both in himself and others, if he be capable of Correction (pp. 124-125).

³⁶p. 5.

³⁷The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd (London, 1699), p. 291. Drake also used the metaphor in his preface to Thomas Brown's A Legacy for the Ladies, or Characters of the Women of the Age (London, 1705): "It was his [Brown's] fortune to appear upon the Stage of the World when Fears and Jealousies had sour'd the Peoples Blood" (xii).

³⁸Stages, p. 272. Drake also defends the comic dramatists by saying that whatever "is so common and obvious in the World, can't be unnatural upon the Stage, but by using it improperly" (p. 237).

³⁹Ibid., pp. 118-119. Similarly, Drake defends Plautus and Terence: "They have copyed faithfully from Nature, and their Draughts come incomparably near the Life. No outrage is done to the Original, by enlarging or contracting the Features, in order to entertain the Audience with Monsters or Dwarfs, but Humane Life is depicted in its true and just Proportion. If therefore the Images, which their Plays reflect, displease any froward [sic] Cynic, the Fault is in the Face, not the Glass which gives a true representation; and he quarrels with Providence, whose Creatures Mankind is, if he dislikes the sight" (pp. 243-244).

⁴⁰Consistent with Collier's Platonic view that the stage brought about the wickedness of the age are his comments in A Short View: "The English stage "has not so much as the poor plea of a Precedent, to

which most other ill Things may claim a pretence. 'Tis mostly meer Discovery and Invention: A new World of Vice found out, and planted with all the Industry imaginable" (pp. 54-55). Far from reflecting the world then, the stage, for Collier, created "a new World of Vice" with which to debauch the age.

⁴¹A Scourge for the Play-Houses: Or, the Character of the English-stage (London, 1702), p. 9.

⁴²Maxims and Reflections upon Plays (London, 1699), p. 66.

⁴³p. 5.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁵Works, IV, 241-242.

⁴⁶Stroup, p. 41.

⁴⁷Essays, I, 58-59.

⁴⁸In discussing the relationship between God and his ministers on earth, Dryden describes the "providential designs" almost as plots, and he notes how God directs "all manner of events on earth" (*Essays*, II, 89).

⁴⁹Stroup, p. 178; also pp. 119-177 (*passim*).

⁵⁰Essays, I, 155; see also II, 49.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, I, 158. Dryden also says that "Tragedy is the miniature of human life; an epic poem is the draught at length" (II, 226).

⁵²p. 32.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵Farquhar echoes Dryden's passage on "the primum mobile" when he says, "In all Productions either Divine or Humane, the final Cause is the first Mover" (Works, II, 335) in discussing the origins of comedy.

⁵⁶Works, II, 337.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 338.

⁵⁸The Old Mode and the New (London, 1709), dedication.

⁵⁹Stages, pp. 289-290.

⁶⁰Critical Works, I, 224-225.

⁶¹Ibid., 226. Obviously, by "more ridiculous" Dennis means more able to be laughed at and thus more pleasing and instructive.

⁶²Stroup, pp. 88-118, *passim*.

⁶³Ibid., p. 116.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 89.

⁶⁵Essays, I, 162. It is interesting that Stroup thinks Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra is the best example of the pageant of the world in Elizabethan drama (p. 99); this provides for some speculation that Dryden's All for Love might capture much of that same pageant also.

⁶⁶P. F. Vernon, in his article, "The Marriage of Convenience and the Moral Code of Restoration Comedy," Essays in Criticism, 12 (1962) says that not only Restoration comedies but heroic dramas and tragedies are almost always concerned in some way with the proper arrangements for marriage (374-375).

⁶⁷Ibid., 375-376. There may also be a ritualistic aspect in matchmaking, for it does reflect part of the pageant of life, and in the plays brings order to those matches justly made.

⁶⁸Ben Ross Schneider, The Ethos of Restoration Comedy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 55-59. Also, Yvonne Bonsall Shafer in "The Proviso Scene in Restoration Comedy," Restoration and Eighteenth-century Theatre Research, 9, no. 1(1970), says that the proviso scene was not cynical, but "was basically a serious attempt to form a union which would last, and which would allow liberty to both parties without leading to a corruption of their relationship" (9).

⁶⁹A Short View, table of contents. He maintains this position in answering Vanbrugh in A Defence of the Short View (1699), pp. 125-126.

⁷⁰A Short View, p. 142.

⁷¹Schneider, pp. 183-190; Williams, "'Utmost Tryal,'" 12-16.

⁷²377-378.

⁷³John Dennis, of course, links man's desire for happiness to a way of reflecting the order and harmony with which God regulates the universe. One important way for man to reach a state of happiness, and thus be in tune with God's grand design is through the stage, as Dennis attempts to show (Critical Works, I, 148ff). While Dennis probably saw instructive examples in both the disorder created by marriages and courtships based on deceit, profit, lust, etc. and the harmony suggested

by relationships founded on love and honesty; a critic like the author of Occasional Paper, III, ix (1719) saw only an abuse of marriage on stage, which meant an inversion of the "Order of Things" and promised to "throw all into Disorder and Confusion" (14).

⁷⁴Amusements Serious and Comical and Other Works, ed. Arthur L. Hayward (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1927), pp. 49-50.

⁷⁵Stroup, pp. 179-180.

⁷⁶English Domestic Or, Homiletic Tragedy 1575 to 1642 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 2.

⁷⁷"Poetical Justice," passim.

⁷⁸"Utmost Tryal," 3 & 17, n. 5.

⁷⁹p. 172. Out of 83 plays, "49 heroines in these plays test their lovers."

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 182. Schneider also says that "libertines do not marry in the end. If they did it would be unjust, especially poetically unjust, for them to marry the splended kind of woman usually matched with the hero of Restoration comedy" (p. 143). His point is that the heroes of Restoration comedy are not libertines but "generous" men who, finally, deserve the heroines.

⁸¹Williams, "Poetical Justice," 547.

⁸²The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer, ed. Curt A. Zimansky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956). p. 22.

⁸³Ibid., p. 75.

⁸⁴A Short View, pp. 154 & 157-159.

⁸⁵A Second Defence of the Short View of the Prophaneness and Immorality of the English Stage (London, 1700), p. 80 & A Short View, p. 140.

⁸⁶A Short View, pp. 100, 148, 152, 164 & 210.

⁸⁷Essays, I, 218.

⁸⁸Ibid., 213. Other similar references to poetic justice in his reply to Rymer are found on pp. 216, 217 and 219. See also "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy" (Essays, I, 245-246).

⁸⁹Essays, II, 48.

⁹⁰Ibid., I, 152.

⁹¹Works, III, 181.

⁹²Works, I, 199.

⁹³Ibid., 212.

⁹⁴Ibid., 213-214.

⁹⁵A Farther Defence, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 12

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 64-65.

⁹⁸Phaeton or, the Fatal Divorce (London, 1698), preface.

⁹⁹I, 188-196.

¹⁰⁰Critical Works, I, 183. See also p. 230.

¹⁰¹Ibid., II, 20-21.

¹⁰²Ibid., 49.

¹⁰³pp. 44-45 & 56-57.

¹⁰⁴Maxims, pp. 54 & 116-117.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹⁰⁶Some Remarks upon Mr. Collier's Defence of His "Short View" (London, 1698), p. 16.

¹⁰⁷Some of those who show the same special regard for the primary moral implications of "Fable: are Rymer, Critical Works, p. 108; Dryden, Essays, I, 59; Gildon, Post-Man Robb'd, pp. 44-45; Farquhar, Works, II, 336; Filmer, Defence, p. 50ff. Even the author of The Occasional Paper, III, ix (opposing the stage) calls the plot "the Master-Wheel of this elegant Machine," the play. And Drake goes so far as to say that the modern playwrights introduced "Poetic Justice upon the Stage," and "they were the first that made it their constant aim to instruct, as well as please by the Fable" (p. 229).

¹⁰⁸Restoration Tragedy: Form and the Process of Change (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 15-16.

¹⁰⁹Stages, pp. 121-122.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 144-145, 204-205 (These two passages were in italics), 210, 215, 270-271.

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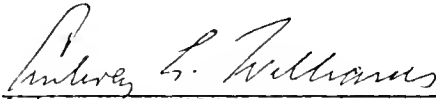
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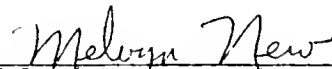
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Joseph John Popson, III was born in East Cleveland, Ohio on August 19, 1944. He attended public schools in Cleveland and graduated from Maynard Evans High School in Orlando, Florida in 1962. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Florida in 1967. He next attended Florida State University as a graduate teaching assistant in English and received his Master of Arts degree in 1969. While working on his Ph.D. at the University of Florida, he was a graduate assistant in English (1969-1972) and an NDEA fellow (1973). Presently, he is an Assistant Professor of English at Macon Junior College in Macon, Georgia. He and his wife, Sandy, were married in 1967 and have one boy, Joe-Joe.

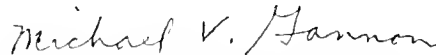
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Aubrey L. Williams
Graduate Research Professor

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Melvyn New
Associate Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


Michael V. Gannon
Associate Professor of Religion

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dean, Graduate School

